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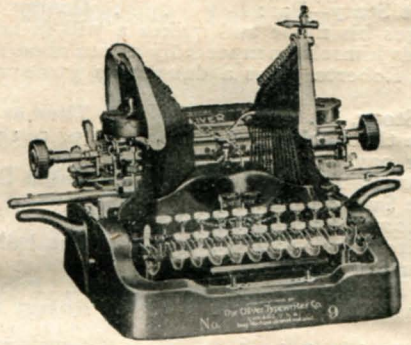

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Vol. LXIII. No. 2 — February 7, 1922

CONTENTS

The Shaman. A Complete Novel, ... **Roy Norton** . . . 1
Was it for good or for evil that Lady Malitka wielded despotic power in that land of the Far North? The answer to that question meant much to Braith and Hathaway, and in its answering Peluk, the shaman, played a big part.

Classics in Slang, ... **H. C. Witwer** . . . 78
VI. The Merchant of Venice.
According to McTague, making 130 pounds ringside came near being a painful matter for Battling Antonio.

Spunyarn. A Four-Part Story—Part I. . . **George Hugh Banning** . 84
Tom Whittly changes his name and makes a will in favor of Dick Farrier, who finds himself unexpectedly at sea aboard the *Aggie Newmiller*, and Roberta plays a dangerous game with serious results.

Little Amby. A Short Story, ... **Thomas McMorrow** . 108
Most men may have their price, but there was a price that Ambrose Hinkle wouldn't pay.

Bright Roads of Adventure. A True Story, . . **Ralph D. Paine** . . 119
VI.—Farewell to the Sword of Gomez.
Lights and shadows of the filibustering game.

Caught in the Net. Editorials, ... **The Editor** . . . 130
Longer Lives. American Trees for War's Waste. The New Idea in Parks. Future Immigration. More Workers. Popular Topics.

"Love Powders and Dragon's Blood." . . . **Robert McBlair** . . 135
A Short Story.
There *was* a bit of the heroic in the make-up of "Fish" Kelly, after all.

The Spark in the Tinder, ... **Holman Day** . . . 141
A Five-Part Story—Part II.
When "Skiddy" Trask returns from a journey he brings tragedy with him, and his uncle learns the truth of that old saying about a man's troubles.

Pen Shots of Champions. A Sport Series, . . **Grantland Rice** . . 170
V.—Stanislaus Zbyszko, Heavyweight Wrestling Champion.

Smoke-wagon Moves In. A Short Story, . . **Ralph E. Mooney** . . 173
Even changed environment doesn't cramp the style of a master workman.

Dan Price. Verse, ... **Henry Herbert Knibbs** . 183

The Story of Gombi. A Short Story, . . . **H. de Vere Stacpoole** . 184
A strange tale of hunting strange game.

A Chat With You 191

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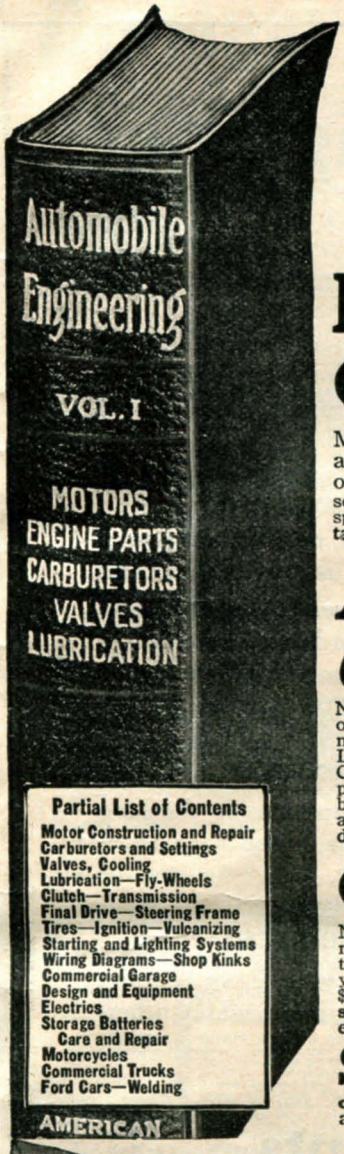

Partial List of Contents

Motor Construction and Repair
Carburetors and Settings
Valves, Cooling
Lubrication—Fly-Wheels
Clutch—Transmission
Final Drive—Steering Frame
Tires—Ignition—Vulcanizing
Starting and Lighting Systems
Wiring Diagrams—Shop Kinks
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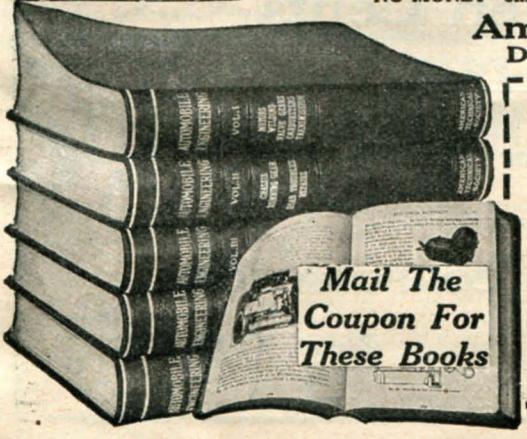

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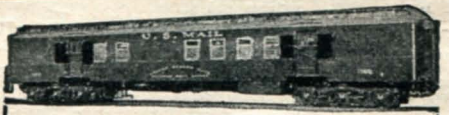

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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The Shaman

By Roy Norton

Author of "The Shark and the Sentimentalist," "David and Goliath," Etc.

It was in the days when Alaska's silent solitudes were unknown and unsought by this white race of ours—before the cry of "Gold!" rang round the world. Yet into those frozen silences on a strange mission of their own had pierced Hathaway and Braith. And there their bones would have whitened had it not been for the mysterious "Lady Malitka"—and Peluk, the shaman. Shaman? Cæsar was a shaman—so was Washington—so was Mohammed; and obscure though he was Peluk was brother to these. Whether he was also an unmitigated villain or a greatly benevolent man is for you who read this fine tale to judge.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

ASIDE from its physical beauty gold is not worth much, after all!

Because its dominion has been for so many ages undisputed; because the hunger for it has betrayed souls; because myriads of men and women have throughout all time gambled blood, lives, and honor for its possession, none of these has made me either detest it or bow head and knee in reverence. I recognized it as a metal. Beautiful? Yes. The most beautiful of all—enduring, unrusting, maintaining its dignified luster though buried beneath the clean, unbroken earth, or recovered after long handling from the muck heaps of human cesspools.

For that undefilable, unconquerable, austere quality I honor it; but for that alone. Yet this I who am now old and gray can boast: that not any of it ever came other than clean to my hands nor left thereafter polluted by my transient touch. I have no gold that I did not earn by the sweat of physical effort or the barter of such mental creations as were my inheritance, save that which came from Peluk, the shaman.

A shaman? To me it seems strange that there are those who do not know the word in its value. For it means many things. It is more than a mere title. It cannot be conferred by potentate, autocrat, or king. It is an endowment of respect rather than election, bestowed upon those who, wise in the lore, history, or accomplishments of a tribe of men are given due and merited deference. The quality of the service depends upon the ideals of the tribe. Gibbon, the historian, was a shaman to those of the English-speaking race. Napoleon, but for his fall, might have become a shaman to the French. Cæsar was shaman to his own. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were American shamen in their day. And, doubtless, so was Tamerlane and Mohammed and Herodotus, as well as the chief of that South Seas cannibal tribe who decreed that the most certain way of disposing of Captain Cook was not only to kill him, but thereafter to eat and digest him. And so, great or small, down through all human history they pass.

It is of one of the obscure shamen that I would tell. Whether he was a great murderer, an unmitigated villain, a monster, or a benevolent despot, I leave to judgment.

Interwoven with this memory of the shaman is the Lady Malitka, concerning whose reputation and characteristics there was at one time much dispute. Whether, as some of her followers and supporters declared, she

was a martyr, or, as her enemies and detractors insisted, a human tigress, is also a matter of opinion. She is still alive and, of all, cares least.

That the genesis of a sinister sequence of trying adventures was toward the day when John Braith and I first heard her name, is certain. That was in the days when the silent North slept, unknown, unsought, the goal or desire of none of this white race of ours. Its vast solitude, majestic and severe, swept from the shores of the Bering on the west, to Hudson Bay on the east, a dormant and hardly accessible land, carpeted with flowers beneath the short summer's suns, blanketed in the long arctic night beneath frozen snows; filled in summer with the songs of breeding and unmolested birds; silent in winter with a stillness so profound, so unreal, so intense, that life in any form seemed unknown, impossible.

And it was through this latter season that, spent, starving, teamed together with skeleton dogs, dying, as were we, and yet desperately and together fighting for life, Jack Braith and I staggered down the white expanse of a river that still is unknown to the maps.

Braith, my partner, was snow-blind. For five days we had traveled thus, he, poor fellow—as white a man as ever lived!—clinging to the handlebars of the sled. Our last sight of human beings had been at a little, squalid native village whose inhabitants were themselves on the verge of starvation. The younger men were all gone, in quest of game, and an old *tyune* made us understand that they could furnish us with neither food nor a guide; but with a "story knife" he drew on the earthen floor of the *kashime* a map indicating how the next village might be reached. "Four sleeps," he said, indicating that ours must be a journey of four days. And then looking at our starved dogs he shook a doubtful head, pointed at the animals, and corrected it to "five sleeps."

Both my partner and I knew a few words of the native tongue used in that village, but not enough to understand his guttural patter through which at regular intervals came a word, "Malitka."

"What do you suppose that means?" Braith asked, staring at me. "That word Malitka that he uses so much."

I took from the *tyune's* gnarled hand his story knife and drew a crude picture of native huts and then questioned: "Malitka?" He nodded his head in assent; but to our bewilderment now drew a picture of a woman and, tapping it with his knife, said, "Malitka."

"I can't make out whether that's the name of an Indian village or an Indian woman," I said to Jack, and we gave it up after making a copy of the route map on the back of an envelope which the headman finally took from my hands and elaborated to indicate mountain passes we must find and other places to be avoided.

The *tyune's* prediction that it would require "five sleeps" proved wrong; for it was on the second day after our departure from that village and its miseries that the winter terror of the North, snow blindness, smote my partner's sight and put drags upon our progress. He suffered silently throughout the brief hours of daylight; he suffered grimly throughout the long nights, making no complaint, passing no remarks save to deplore the extra burdens imposed upon me. And I, whose eyes must serve for two, whose visual judgment must serve lest we lose our way through the great wastes and piled-up mountains, traveled with fear in my heart.

It was on the sixth night, in the tiny trail tent, after I had trickled warm water into those widely staring, blood-red, tortured eyes, that Braith reached up from where he lay flat on his back on the blankets and caught my hand in his.

"Old man," he said, and there was neither fear nor wavering in his voice, "I've been thinking it over as we came along to-day and, although I can't see, I know how things are going."

"Oh, but we're getting along all right," I insisted.

"No. No use in evading me, partner," he said, shaking his head. "I can still hear, although I can't see. To-day there were only five dogs left in the team. The sixth was too weak to pull and you left him out. He followed us all day, sometimes falling far behind, then in desperate terror catching up again. Yesterday morning you slipped away from the camp and put one out of its misery with an ax, not using your gun lest I hear the sound. To-night you pretended to eat but didn't. I found it out while you were out of the tent by counting the remaining fish—I counted them last night, too. You didn't——"

"Count nothing! You might have found

one bundle of the dog fish on which all of us are working on mighty small rations; but the other bundle——"

"It won't do," he interrupted. "There is no other bundle. The time has come when we've got to have a straight talk. We've been together some years now—you and I—Jim, and I don't think I've ever given you reason to think that I couldn't stand the gaff when things came to the worst. Well, they must be about there now."

I could not at that moment answer. I was weak, hungry, nearly whipped. Outside a famished dog moaned and whimpered to the cold, merciless stars.

"Jim," he said, sitting up on the blankets and staring at me with those pitifully blinded eyes as if he could see through the red veil, "tell me the truth. Do you think we've got off in the wrong direction and have missed the way to that village or woman, or whatever it is?"

Again I could not answer. He had voiced the fear that tormented my own mind.

"Come," he said patiently. "Let's have the truth. I could feel that half dozen times to-day you stopped and took from underneath your parka that map we drew—a copy of the old native's route. You took it out to study it because you were uncertain. It's no use trying to keep things from me. And —I must know to-night. Must know now!"

For another moment I hesitated, sitting there with those sightless eyes fixed on me. Then, half-despairing, I told the truth.

"I have been worried," I admitted. "Either the old fellow's map was not clear, or—or—I was too stupid to read it. All day I have traveled without a landmark that I could identify."

For a long time he pondered while I, cold, hungry, sat helpless. Our situation indeed seemed hopeless.

"Then," said Braith at last, very gently, "there is but one thing left to do. To-morrow you must take the trail alone."

"Alone? Leave you here—alone?" I stammered, scarcely able to believe my ears.

"Yes," he said. "There's no use in both of us dying. You must take the dogs that can still travel, and the grub, and—go on, Jim. Go on to the end—whatever it is."

I refused volubly, with that stark, violent language that one employs in desperation. But he was immovable. I argued; persuaded; begged; but it was all of no avail. He was determined—intent on giving me at least an opportunity for my life, resolutely bent on self-sacrifice that I might have a one-thousandth chance to survive. He attempted to convince me that if I went on alone and found this native village—that infinitesimally small spot in thousands of square miles of a frozen, unknown land, I could then return and succor him.

I suppose that there is a point where human endurance reaches mental rather than physical break, that sanity may go first leaving behind but an animal entity fighting to the last for self-preservation. It doesn't matter. All that is of moment is in what I did. For before I went to sleep that night, beaten by hunger and exhaustion into a nightmare of semiconsciousness, my plan was formed. I was determined that we should survive or die together, somewhere out there in the snows that stretched ahead for thousands of miles.

Jack was still asleep when I quietly threw the blankets off in the terrible cold of the new dawn, the one that promised to prove our last. He was greatly my physical superior—a man of prodigious strength and activity. Blind though he was, my sole hope of conquest and subjugation rested in overpowering him and rendering him helpless. I cannot even yet be certain which of us was the madman. I presume it may have been I who had slipped across that borderland.

I got the pack lashings, the long, slender rope with which we bound our sled for each day's journey, and with infinite pains and gentle movement lest I disturb him, got a loop over one outflung arm as it lay upon his chest, brought it over his back, and slipped it beneath another unheeding wrist. I cut it there and then bent over his feet that rested closely together in the bottom folds. I hobbled him effectually without awakening him. And then, with an abrupt pull, I tightened and bound his hands behind him. Startled, alert, angry, he struggled for a moment, and then, recognizing his helplessness, he lay still.

"Jack," I said, "it's just as well to take things easy. You can't help yourself. You wouldn't give in last night. You've got to, now. I'll not leave you behind. To-day you'll ride. It's one of just two things; the last ride you'll ever take, or the worst one you'll ever have."

I could discern that he believed himself in the power of a maniac who loved him,

but a maniac nevertheless. I surmise that I was. I cannot entirely remember what I thought then. Yet I can remember this much: that I made no effort to remove either the tent, or its tiny square of sheet metal stove, and considered nothing save the little bundle of moldy dog fish, the sled and the dogs. In a reckless mood I fed the starving dogs the last food we had. I envied them as they tore the scanty, filthy food. To me they were devouring epicurean morsels beyond value. My sole hope was that they might gain strength for this crucial day that must be our last hope. To-night or wherever we paused when spent, one of them must die, be murdered, that we and his teammates might try for one day more. To-morrow, if we survived the day, another dog must die and the sled, which the others would not have sufficient strength to pull, be abandoned.

"Well, will you walk, or must I throw you on the sled and haul you?" I demanded of my partner when all my preparations to start had been made.

"I can't help myself," he muttered. "You are mad! Clean mad! What do you intend to do with me?"

"If you'll promise to walk, I'll loosen your feet and tether your hands to the handlebars of the sled so you can run behind. If you won't do that, I'll throw you on top of the blankets on the sled, tie you there, and go on."

"You may loosen my feet and tie my hands," he said.

It is impossible for me to remember the start or the stages of our progress; but I can imagine reeling dogs and reeling men, silent, hopeless, staggering down a white valley which in summertime must have been marked in its center by a stream but was now a white, hollow channel between high hills. I can picture one man whose hands were tied to the handles of a birch sled, moving, stumbling in blindness wheresoever he was dragged. I see a swerving, uncertain figure, a scarecrow, a half-dead lunatic in front, cursing through frostbitten lips the dogs, the man behind, and the cold topaz of arctic skies, and striving to lead the way.

But I can vividly recall a time when, with bent head, I saw traces in the snow—human traces—the sign of a sled pulled by dogs, the faint impact of moccasin-clad feet behind. I can still recall the bewilderment, the time it took me to appreciate that human beings had traversed this perilous waste. I can bring back the mental struggle to gather something from this sign, the conclusion that, inasmuch as this trail was fairly fresh and going in a certain direction, our sole hope lay in following it. I vaguely remember when the dog Barth fell and the weight of his body, still lashed to the sled, brought the panting dogs to a halt. I picked him up, laid him on the sled, slashed off a piece of pack rope and thereafter, with it across my shoulder pulled to assist the dogs—nothing more than a dying dog myself, feeling an awful kinship with the brutes.

The trail led upward over what appeared to be the frozen bed of a tiny stream that wound through great high hills and was bordered by cliffs so abrupt that it would have been impossible to scale them. After a time it abruptly passed through mountain gates into a valley. And there, to my bewilderment, I saw an Indian village different from any I had ever seen before.

Here, instead of squalid barrabaras—mere holes in the ground entered by tiny tunnels through which one must creep on hands and knees over refuse and filth to emerge in a cellarlike habitation in whose center was a fire pit—here, I say, instead of such barrabaras, were cabins built of logs. Outside of them were caches such as white men build, elevated in the air on log pillars, accessible only by the aid of ladders, dry, well roofed, secure. I had no time to bestow more than a startled glance before the dogs gave tongue and rushed forward recklessly expending their last reserve of energy. Poor brutes! I appreciated what scent and what they saw told to them! Food and shelter from the cold that was so intense that it burned and branded like living flame.

From the village there swept outward an answering pack, turbulent, resentful, strong. It rushed toward us a living and menacing flood, ready to gnash and tear our feeble bodies. Alarmed, I rushed to the sled and seized a rifle, prepared to fight to the last. Suddenly a shrill whistle shrieked through the still air, and the pack was checked. Doors opened and figures appeared upon the great white snows. As if amazed by such an unprecedented sight as that of travelers, these figures were slow to move. Then, as if recovering from a spell, they rushed toward us, men, women, and children, clad in skins, or voluminous denims,

and shouting guttural expostulations to their dogs. They closed down upon us where in a little black group on the snow we waited. They breathed soft, but audible "Ah-h-h-hs!" at the sight of two white men, one of whom lay still and blanketed on the sled, and the other who, still clinging to a rifle, waited to learn whether this reception meant life or death.

Suddenly they parted, muttering "Peluk! Peluk!" and with something akin to deference made way for a man who walked hastily toward us and came to a stop. Tall as he was, for he was at least six feet in stature, he appeared squatty, by reason of his enormous width of shoulders, his gorilla-like chest and arms, and his great pillars of legs that braced apart and became rigid when he halted. His head was bare, as if he defied the cold, and his bristling hair, cropped, coarse, and thick, was blue-black save where an occasional thread of white bespoke age or hardship.

His face was massive, with high cheek bones, and his chin scarcely concealed by a sparse black growth of beard, was formidable. His thin-lipped, firm, almost cruel mouth was unsmiling. Nor was there a gleam of any discernible emotion, anger or mercy, in his black eyes that, sharp as those of a bird of prey, slowly and carefully scrutinized us. They stared from beneath eyebrows heavier than I have ever seen in any Indian of the North. The nose might have been that of a great Sioux chieftain; a warrior's nose; the nose of a fierce and relentless conqueror.

And then, to my astonishment, he spoke in English:

"Put down gun. Don't shoot. You starved. Me know. Dogs most dead. You most dead. This man—him already dead? No, think not; for then why haul on sled? Come. We help."

I dropped my rifle and then in soft and decisive gutturals he addressed his followers. Babbling like children released from authority, some of them drove the village dogs away while others, with hands on the sides of the birch rails, pushed the sled forward at a run. Our dogs ran lightly with unstretched harness. Peluk, after another look into my face, patted me on the back and said, "Not far now. Me understan'. You not strong. Here! I help!"

He thrust a sturdy hand under my armpit and assisted me in that last lap of the race against death in which we—Jack Braith, myself, and the dogs had won.

CHAPTER II.

Up a slight bank we stumbled and out upon the long, gently ascending slope where the village was built. My astonishment increased when I observed that the cabins were so situated that they formed an orderly whole and bordered a straight and well-defined street. At its upper and higher end, as if posted where it might overlook all, stood a log structure larger than any of the others in the village which it appeared to dominate. A dozen glazed windows stared at us. A porch with hewn pine pillars, the first of its kind I had ever seen in Alaska, was centered by a storm door. It seemed a long way off, and yet my relentless guide prevented us from rushing into the first cabin for succor and forced us forward until we came to a halt in front of the great house.

"The Lady Malitka!" he said, as if in apologetic explanation. "Malitka must see —and speak."

Doubtless the excitement created by our arrival had warned her of our coming. She may even have observed us through some one of the windows. But we were compelled to wait there in front of the house, like those seeking royal audience, for perhaps ten full minutes. Eventually the door opened and through it stalked a figure which, much to my surprise, was not clad in the customary native garb or the garb of the trader or that of the few white denizens of the Northlands.

Her clothing was akin to the garments of civilization, being made of heavy wool that must have come from some English or perhaps American loom, fashioned into a short skirt and a straight-hanging, loose coat not unlike that of a woman's sporting costume. Her feet were incased in exquisitely made boots of soft leather that reached above her knees. She stopped and from the vantage of the raised porch looked down upon us. Instantly the natives made gestures of grave respect and all their garrulous clamor died to silence.

She called to my conductor and I think must have asked him to explain what he knew of our presence, for the shaman spoke at length in his own tongue, pointing now and then at the back trail, at our wearied dogs that had fallen upon the snow too

nearly spent to resist the chance for rest. Then, leaving my side, he stepped to the sled and abruptly pulled back the blankets, exposing my partner, who lay as if unconscious.

Malitka moved quickly forward, and looked down at Braith for a moment before turning her scrutiny upon me. It may have been due to the weakness of my condition or the unexpected situation in which we stood, but I somehow felt that she was coldly considering our fate as an aloof judge might in a case involving life and death; I felt that if I did not find some favor in her sight I, with my helpless companion and starving dogs, might be whipped out into the wastes to inevitable death.

Her face was turned fully to mine and on a level—for, although I am five feet seven inches in stature, she was as tall as I. Hers was a clean-cut face with an aquiline nose, firm chin, and with nothing in it to suggest Indian blood. Her mouth was not Indian. It was too well formed, too small, too thin-lipped, and now it suggested inflexibility, perhaps mercilessness, that was disturbing to one in my position. Her head was bare and great masses of hair, nearly blue-black, were plainly but well done up, which was also a most unusual thing for a native woman.

But it was her eyes that held me, that probed, asking unvoiced questions, that disconcerted me with their still stare. I think that had I been confronted by any less austere being, any woman betraying more humanity, I should have cried to her in exasperation to make an end to this wait inflicted upon one helpless, unconscious man, and another who was giddy from fatigue and starvation.

"Who are you?" she suddenly asked. "And how did you find your way here?"

"We found our way here only because we came upon a sled trail and are—as you see—and we followed it," I answered.

"But you have not answered my first question? I suppose therefore that you are either prospectors or traders, and——"

"We are neither," I interrupted, eager to be done with this inquisition, and for the first time I saw an actual break of something human in that stern face of hers, for she started as if curious to learn what other motives might bring men from that thousands-of-miles-distant civilization to such an unknown land as this.

"You are then—what?" she demanded, still staring at me with those extraordinarily cold eyes.

"If you must know," I exclaimed, exasperated and resolved to put an end to this delay that meant more, I feared, to my partner than to myself, "my friend and I took on the task of coming into this country to find a man named Harris Barnes, or to get proof of his death. We were employed by a firm of lawyers and——"

I stopped as abruptly as I had spoken. I was momentarily consternated when the woman lifted both hands upward with a jerk, held them there arrested after that involuntary movement, and her lips opened as if to speak, while her head bent suddenly forward and her eyes opened widely and fired with a different light. She was alive, at that moment, vivid, intense, startled.

"You came to—you came here—thus far—to—to——" she began, then stopped as if catching herself and as if become impatient of further dalliance after reaching swift decision.

Quickly she turned from me, slapping her hands together as if to emphasize the decisiveness of commands, and spoke in their tongue to the waiting shaman, and to the villagers, who sprang to obedience. Some of them leaped forward, unharnessed our poor dogs, picked them up in their arms and carried them away. Others under the shaman's direction gently lifted my partner from the sled and solicitously carried him into the great house in front of which we stood. Bewildered, feverish with starvation, relieved as I was, I could not but note the astonishment of these natives whose demeanor indicated that this was a most unprecedented event. They even hesitated as if questioning whether they had heard her order aright, until she sharply repeated it. They glanced at me with a new and strange look of respect. Their previous attitude of expectant, obedient waiting was dissipated. In my wonderment I stood stolidly alone, until the woman returned from the foot of the steps whither she had walked while giving directions, I think, and herself put a hand on my arm.

"Come," she said in that same peculiar English that, while flawless in expression and construction, had yet in it a faint foreign accent. "They are taking your companion to a room in my house, where I will give him attention. You, too, are my guest. I am

sorry for the delay. But—it was important. Your friend is smitten by the snows and starvation. You are in but little better state. Can I assist you?"

She had changed remarkably, and was now but a woman, sympathetic, succoring, pitying. Her shapely hand, strong and firm, caught itself beneath my arm and helped me, weak, staggering, surrendering at last in a great let-down from resolution and distress, until we also stood within the warmth of her home. She conducted me into a huge room and indicated a chair.

"Sit there, for the time being," she said, "until I have cared for your friend."

Again she made that sharp clapping sound with her hands, and as I sank into the depths of a comfortable chair I was but half aware that in response to her summons a neatly clad native woman appeared, was given some quick orders, and disappeared, followed immediately by this strange hostess. I think that, overcome, I must have dropped back and closed my eyes, for I have no recollection of any emotion—not even of curiosity—until I was aroused by softly spoken words:

"Drink! Must now drink this. Hope not too hot. Drink. Open eyes and drink."

I opened my eyes obediently and my nostrils caught an odor that made of me for the moment little other than a famishing beast, the sharp pungent scent of beef tea. I clutched the cup with the wolfish hands of a starving man. I tore it from the brown hands of the servitor, as a famished wolf snatches ravenously at food. Heedless of its temperature, I drained the cup with great gulps, nor could I have restrained my desire had its heat scalded my throat.

"More!" I cried. "For the love of God! Bring more!"

Half frightened by my shout, the native woman took the cup from my hand and backed away. It seems odd to me, now, that even then I paid no attention or regard to my surroundings; that I sat there watching the door through which the woman had disappeared; and that I twitched restlessly in my seat, angry with delay because another cup, other pints, whole gallons of that warming and life-restoring fluid were not immediately put at my disposal. I heard muttered conversation in that unknown tongue outside the door—unmistakably conveying to me that the servant woman had addressed herself to her mistress, as if seeking directions, and unmistakably the quiet, steady instructions in reply.

I waited through an agony of famine, an interval that may have lasted for five minutes. And then again a cup—too small!—a mere tantalizing thing of torture, it seemed to me—was tendered for my grasp. Again I drained it to its dregs, holding it bottom upward in the air that its last faint trickle of contents might minister to my need.

"Enough now! Bimeby more. Lady Malitka say so. Not good too much too soon, or bimeby be sick!" said the native woman, in her hesitant use of my language. "No! No!" she expostulated, when I insisted. "Too much no good. Pretty soon have more. Must wait. Lady say so."

Sometimes, thinking of it all, I see myself as I must have appeared there in that room, after she again left me alone. A gaunt skeleton of a man, gray-haired and bearded, booted with *mukluks* in which were many holes of camp fire and wear, and with sprawling, tired feet, a torn cap of skins on his head, skinny, twitching hands, unwashed, chapped and cracked, thrown listlessly on the arms of a denim-covered chair, with feverish eyes fixed vacantly upward, and cursing perhaps because more food was not immediately forthcoming. All of that time is still hazy. But, so quick is the marvelous recovery of one's brain and body by replenishment of supply, that I think in perhaps no more than half an hour I straightened in my chair and for the first time appreciated my surroundings.

The room was the largest I had ever seen in a structure of logs. At one end a great fireplace of rough country rock was filled with live coals and a glowing section of log, and on the mantlepiece were collected, haphazard, crude curios of Indian origin. Above it were other rare things of native craft or significance. Story knives of bone, precious possessions of long-dead hands; fish and game spears; great bows with thongs of caribou sinew; miniature canoes, *bidarkas*, *oumilaks* of birch or skin; caribou belts with their tale of teeth attesting the prowess of the hunter; ancient war clubs of knotted root and natural shape; buttons and medallions of carven bone; a great tusk of a mammoth dug from some glacial belt and intricately depicting the chase of ancient times; tanned skins upon whose brown surfaces had been burned or pigmented the crude conceptions of some struggling crea-

tive artist of his tribe who may have been, to it, a master.

I then observed a lounge fashioned after the comfortable shapes that we of the civilized world have evolved, chairs of various shapes, skins of precious worth, from that of the monstrous white polar bear to the red fox and the caribou, covering a time-polished floor, and in one corner was a Russian stove of porcelain whose white tiles seemed out of place and incongruous in such a setting. Its glow, through tiny grates, seemed watching and malevolently triumphant over the broader but less utilitarian blaze of the open fire.

In the ceiling the stained beams that served as rafters were alternately carved in grotesque patterns as if the concept of them had been stolen from ancient totem poles in villages far away, villages washed by the tides of the open sea. At one side of the room were crude cases containing books, whose bindings, in orderly array, protested that they at least were not of barbaric origin. A huge Russian lamp was suspended above a generous center table on which were carelessly thrown many things, indicating the amenities of civilization grotesquely placed here in the heart of the unknown, thousands of miles from the place of their origin.

My impatience for food gave way to curiosity, and it was well that it did, for I was compelled to wait another half hour before I was served with something more substantial. I was hungrily finishing the last crumbs when Malitka entered and, standing in the doorway, said, "Your friend has recovered quite well. You may see him if you wish."

I arose and followed her into a comfortable bedroom in which were two substantial beds evidently made by an amateur cabinet-maker, a washstand with a square mirror in its center and, best of all, a portable bath-tub filled to the brim with steaming water. Jack was sitting in a comfortable chair wrapped in a blanket and with a bandage around his head to shield his eyes. The door closed behind Malitka as she disappeared.

"What on earth do you make of all this?" he asked. "Where are we? I've had food and a woman who talks English put some wonderfully cooling lotion on my eyes, provided me with a bath that was about the most enjoyable one I've ever had—after all these weeks on the trail and in dirty barrabaras—and, from the sound, I judge they have emptied the tub and filled it again for your benefit. Also it seems that somewhere here in the room are two suits of clothes and some clean underwear of some sort that are put out for use. Where the deuce are we, anyhow? I can't understand it at all!"

"No more can I," I replied. "It beats me."

I found the two changes and saw that the underwear was of the coarse type provided at trading posts. It was not new and, furthermore, must have been packed away for some time in a moth-proof preparation. The two suits of clothing, Mackinaw trousers and coats, also betrayed wear and storage, although clean. But I did not pause long to consider these matters, for the bath was an enticement.

CHAPTER III.

The short arctic day was gone long before I had finished my welcome change into cleanliness; and then, leading my partner, I emerged and wondered whether I should be permitted to return to the living room without an invitation. It is a fact that I was still perplexed by this strange woman's demeanor. Despite her attention and hospitality she radiated a chill aloofness, amounting almost to an expression of dislike, and quite as if whatever she had done for us was through sheer impulse of humanity and nothing more. Yet it seemed impossible that in that land so unknown, so remote, any human being would not gladly and eagerly welcome another, particularly if that other came from the distant outside world and spoke the tongue of civilization. In all my varied wanderings, for I was a habituated explorer, I had never before come upon such a peculiar, preposterous situation as this in which Jack and I found ourselves.

While I stood there in the hallway, hesitating, the door of the big living room opened as if Madame Malitka had heard our approach, and she appeared to reassure us.

"You will come this way," she said, more as if accustomed to giving orders than invitations.

We followed her into the room and took seats, suffering embarrassment through the slightly prolonged silence that ensued. She had seated herself beside the fireplace whose roaring flames furnished the sole light in the great room, making across the heavy-beamed

ceiling constantly shifting and flickering shadows. Heavy curtains had been drawn across the windows, lending an air of profound seclusion. Yet here in this big, comfortable, well-furnished room, it was difficult to realize that we were not dwellers in the midst of a hundred other similar dwellings, rubbing elbows with erudition and within reach of the entire populated world. It seemed incredible that thousands of unmapped miles of mountain waste, barren, snow-clad plains, and cold Northern seas intervened between us and the nearest touch that we might make to all that teeming life of the lower latitudes.

Madame Malitka had changed her garb. I have wondered many times since that night whether it was through a vanity that could not be entirely subjugated, or a fixed habit of clinging to that slight but rigid hold upon self-respect which every being who has known civilized forms can never quite abandon and lose.

She sat beside us, silent, staring at the fire as if perplexed by some untoward event, clad in a simple blouse of some white woolen material, a skirt of regulation length that fell in plain folds to meet the tops of regulation shoes. I use the word "regulation" because I can think of no other to signify such an astounding factor of importance as the sight of a pair of woman's leather shoes in such a place. In any great city on earth they might have been deemed coarse, perhaps unfashionable, but here, in the heart of remoteness, they became pregnant with meaning. Plain leather shoes of calfskin in a land thousands of miles from where the skins of beef calves are tanned or produced!

The woman wore none of the ornaments customary to her sex. Her delicately shaped ears bore no jewels, and stood white and clear against the masses of her black hair. Her face, in profile to me, with the light of the fire illuminating one white side, was Minervalike in its chiseled outline, clean cut, cold, judicial, and yet capable of many nobilities. It was the profile of a face that might soften into summer's warmth with love, yet might harden to winter's chill with hatred. It suggested tragedies; dead ambitions; betrayed confidences; conquered hopes!

As she made a slight movement with her slender, yet capable hands, my inquisitive eyes caught a glint of gold, and I saw upon one of her fingers a wedding ring.

"You are feeling better?" she questioned, and both Jack and I, not knowing which of us she addressed, told her that we were, and each in turn thanked her.

"Snow blindness," she said, without shifting her gaze from the fire, "passes swiftly with care and treatment." She paused and then, turning toward me, asked, "Where did you come from—up here?"

"From a village that I think the natives call Thluckstova," I replied. "We had hoped to get food there. They were starving."

"Doubtless! she said, and repeated, "doubtless. The Indians of this country lack foresight. And so, when the warmest seasons cause the game to go far northward, they—pay the penalty. Death teaches much —too late!"

I turned and stared at her. My partner, lifting bandaged eyes, also faced her as if wondering what peculiar place this might be and how peculiar this hostess of ours.

"The natives of this place that you call Thluckstova—I think it lies many days' journey to the southeast—they gave you directions how to reach this place?"

I cannot to this day tell what there was in her voice, rather than in her words of mere idle gossip and inquiry, that put me on guard. I answered evasively:

"No, madame. The natives of that village did not tell us how to reach you. We could not understand their tongue, but we gathered from their vague signs that somewhere in this direction might live those who would help us. We could not have found you save for a random trail of sled runners upon snow which we followed."

"I must find out who made them," she muttered as if speaking to herself. "The unforeseen chance—one in a thousand—the detail overlooked! Others might see the same and——"

With a quick, sharp movement she faced me as if about to ask something more, met my eyes, and then turned away.

"Well," she said, "you are here, and safe. The chance in a thousand. Do you know how far you must have gone to the northwest to find another human being? More than two hundred miles!"

"We should have died," I admitted.

"Then," she said, suddenly facing me again, and staring at me across the firelit space, "you acknowledge some obligation? That which I impose upon you is secrecy.

For certain reasons which are not to be questioned I, and those who live in this village, desire to remain undisturbed, unknown. Is it agreed that if you leave here, you will tell no one of this place?"

I did not immediately answer; but Braith, deep-voiced, intent as none but a blind man can be, swung toward her and said, "Of course! Does one betray that other who saves him? Madame, or miss, whatever you may be, I call you to mark that my friend and I are gentlemen. To such the wish of a woman who has saved them is a command."

I saw her turn and study him, as if an unexpected and vital being had interposed in her orbit. His bandaged eyes were directed toward hers by instinct. It was as if they stared at each other.

"For some reason that neither of us can question," he continued while she considered speech, "you request silence. And so, when we pass from here, we forget. Your motives we cannot question. That is a fair compact. Is it not?"

She nodded her head as if his sightless eyes could discern her acceptance, regarded him for a moment more and then, as if recalling my presence, turned toward me and said, "Perhaps it would be better to light the lamp. Will you favor me—no—I——"

"Permit me," I said, and took from her hand a box of matches and, after a period of fumbling, lighted the Russian lamp that hung from a beam above the center table.

Both Jack and I hoped that she was about to vouchsafe some explanation of herself, her strange village, or her desire for secrecy. This was not her intention; for she fell to cross-questioning me regarding our mission, and I suspected that before beginning this examination she wished the light full on my face as if to gather possible ocular evidence that I was telling the whole truth. I saw no reason why I should evade, for neither Jack nor I had the slightest ulterior motive, nor any mission other than that of which I had told her.

"A man named Harris Barnes," I explained, upon discovering that she expected me to give a full and explicit account of ourselves, "if alive, is sole heir to property in Boston valued at about a quarter of a million dollars. A considerable number of years ago—about twelve as I remember it—he had a quarrel and final estrangement with his father who never saw him again and never again communicated with him. Barnes, the elder, died nearly two years ago; but before doing so, and conceiving the quarrel to have been due to his own irascibility of temper, he made a will in which he sought to make amends to his son.

"He not only left him the entire property, but added thereto a perfectly legal but peculiar codicil in which he laid upon his executors the obligation of administering the property intact for a period of five years in which they were to exhaust every possible effort to locate Harris Barnes, or to find acceptable and authentic proof of his death. In the latter event, if Harris Barnes had in the meantime left a widow, she, on proof of good character and worthiness, was to come into possession of one hundred thousand dollars, and the remainder of the estate was to be divided among certain distant kinsmen of the family and numerous charities.

"The charitable associations have the most to gain. One or two of them are in need of funds and have been most active in the matter. The executors, but one of whom ever knew the younger Barnes personally, are all men of means and prominence and disinterested. I have met them and believe them honest men, although perhaps they are of an older-fashioned and rather—I am inclined to think—well, to put it baldly, a strait-laced, puritanical type. They lay considerable stress on that clause pertaining to the past, moral reputation and so forth, of the widow, if there be such. They are the kind of men who would far rather see the money all go to charitable institutions and churches than into the possession of a woman who was not up to their rather harsh ideals."

Madame Malitka had sat thus far without interruption, steadily eying me, and evincing nothing more than listening attention; but now, as I paused, she commented in a mirthless bitter voice, "There are many such men in the world from which you come. I have known and—yes, suffered!—from such. Narrow-mindedness, injustice! These are the curses one finds in the world that make isolated spots such as my village seem a paradise of contentment!"

Her suppressed vehemence for an instant shocked me by its appalling fervor, as if she had exposed one hot glimpse of the smoldering volcano of hatred against civilization seething in her brain—the civilization of which, it could not be doubted, she must at

some time have been a part. Nor could one doubt that her place had been one of refinement in that dead life, for her every movement and attitude proved it. There was a suggestion of the imperial in all that I had observed of her demeanor that could not possibly have been gained through the sole experience of dominating, directing, and dictating to a mere village inhabited by natives.

I was aroused from a momentary abstraction, and a lull of silence that may have lasted a full minute, by her voice asking, "Well, and what then? You have not explained your presence here."

"Oh," I replied, "as to that—— Ummh! Where was I? Yes, I have told of the Eastern situation. Well, the younger Barnes was traced until most of his movements were known with the exception of an interim of some two or three years which were of no importance, for he returned to his previous haunt, Seattle, and from there he sailed aboard the *Merman*, a sailing schooner which he had chartered for Katmai, on Shelikof Straits, Alaska. She was laden with trading supplies and there was no attempt on Barnes' part to conceal the fact that his intention was to found one or perhaps a chain of trading posts for furs in this country.

"The *Merman* never returned to port. She was lost with all hands; but it was learned through a half-breed native of the tiny village of Katmai that she came there and landed her cargo; that Barnes bought scores of dogs there and transported others from Kadiak, which is a large settlement, and with native drivers and guides set off into the unknown interior which no white man was ever known to have invaded."

I was thinking of that backward trail when Jack spoke.

"Madame," he said, "my friend seems to believe that he has told all there is to tell. You have asked for an explanation. It is your right. But an explanation, to be worth while, must be complete. Shall I finish it, or is what he has told sufficient?"

Glancing at our hostess, I could not be certain whether it was the story that interested her, or merely a desire to hear him speak that caused her to reply.

"Yes, I should like to hear the remainder."

"When the inquiries had reached that point," Jack said, turning his bandaged eyes toward her, as if despite his temporary blindness he could see through the wrappings, "those men in Boston, whom I have never met, sought a man of some reputation who was qualified to undertake the task that was left them. An absurd task! One that could never have been contemplated save through ignorance. Good Lord! Think of it! Trying to find one man in an unmapped country a third the size of the United States of America, bigger than half the dinky principalities, some of the dukedoms, and half the kingdoms of Europe! This partner of mine has crossed Africa, Tibet, and mapped the Cordilleras. He can use letters after his name. Under that hard old gray head of his are many memories and that which is learned by much experience. He's not old—though if you didn't know his age you might think so. His hair turned white because of the places he had fought into and out of. He knows wild lands and how to live in them. So when this Boston bunch came to an end of their trail at Katmai, they went after him to finish the job. We had been together in Africa and—some pretty tough times, Jim, eh? And I had been in the arctic.

"There was money in this venture. He wrote to me to join him. Partners are that way, once they understand each other, and always know just what the other will do if it comes to hard trails and a bad pinch. So we took on the job. Partly because men such as we always need money, partly because it gave an excuse to travel into a country which was unknown. There's always something interesting in places that are unmapped. We've tried some of them, my friend and I—for just that reason!"

He laughed quietly as if at the absurdity of our characteristics, and ran his hand upward across his bearded, strong, and not unhandsome face; for this partner of mine was of the viking type.

Madame Malitka sat quietly in the depths of her chair with one hand supporting her firm chin and regarding him with a fixed and almost disinterested immobility.

"It seems that some of the Barnes outfit —most of them—died there on Katmai Pass. A wind-swept place of torture. It's—it's an awful place—a frigid hell! The natives don't tackle it very often. They come to its foot and camp. Sometimes for days and days at a time they watch the tip of one high and mighty peak off in the distance. If above it there comes a swirl of snow that makes a cloud, they will not dare. Some-

times, day after day, there comes that cloud. They loaf in their camp. Then comes a day when the sky is topaz, the air sharp and keen as a knife, the white peaks reaching up and up as if in contact with God, and—they rush to throw the packs on the sleds, to lash the trail canvas over them, to gather and harness the dogs. The men take a last look at the camp to see that nothing has been left behind or half buried in the trodden snow, and then—'Mush! March on!' every one cries and there is a race.

"It runs upward, downward, skirts great white swales, clings to narrow places where if a sled were to skid or sway, both sled, men, and panting dogs might fall a thousand feet. And always their eyes are on that far peak. A funnel of the world this! A place where if comes a wrathful wind it sweeps men, dogs, sleds, everything to eternity. Natives have died on that pass within a hundred yards of security. It's a known fact that an iron teakettle weighing pounds was lost off the wreck of a sled owned by an early explorer, Colonel Ebereley, of Tacoma, Washington, and was blown across a hollow a mile in width, up over a rolling mountain more than two hundred feet high and later recovered in a valley beyond that hill.

"A storm must have overtaken the Barnes expedition when it was in the midst of that enormous funnel in the tops of the miles-long hills. Nobody knows who escaped. The few who did never returned to Katmai. The bodies of those who were lost, a big portion of Barnes' stock in trade, and dead dogs were found in that mountain pass a year later. We learned all this, my partner and I, from Petalin, the half-breed trader at Katmai.

"But we learned something else; that there was a rumor among the natives that Barnes survived and with the remnant of his natives and dog teams pressed on into the interior. I've an idea that he was all man. At Sevenoski, an Indian village on the banks of Lake Illiac, they tell of a white man who, with but a few natives and dogs, came and went, heading northwest. They say these men made a camp on Lake Illiac, to rest and recuperate, and then disappeared. Going on, you understand, northward, seeking some indefinite goal.

"That country is hard. Natives in there used to have tribal wars. They were unfriendly. A guide might take a traveler just so far and no farther, if travelers there were. Bethel wasn't known then; but there are natives in that hinterland who say that the first and only white man they had ever seen came through, passed, was gone. That man could have been no other than Barnes.

"My friend and I are on that long-obliterated trail; looking for a man who may be dead or alive. The game has gone northward because the season is milder than usual. The natives for more than a hundred miles southward starve. We have starved, too. Had we not accidentally found you, we must have died, I think, unless there is another native village beyond on which we might have stumbled."

Madame Malitka, whose gaze had never for an instant wavered from his face, lifted her hands and with a decidedly foreign gesture snapped both thumbs and fingers, as if dismissing something of which she knew.

"Another native village? Beyond this to the northwest or northward? There is none for more than two hundred miles, as I told you."

"Then, that being so," Jack said, bending forward, "we have been fortunate in finding you. There is, after all, something in the mercy of God bestowed upon the lost. A something bigger and greater, madame, than I would wish you who have been so kind to us may ever require. Perhaps you have never wanted it. If so you can't understand what it is worth."

It is quite impossible for me to make clear all that I had discerned in this strange woman, that sense of aloofness that encircled her like an invisible shroud, that inhuman, uncanny expression of being entirely foreign to ordinary emotions; so that I was actually surprised when I saw her white hands lift upward in a gesture of impulse, half reach toward Jack, and then fall limply back as if vanquished and helpless. I think that in that moment she might have told us much save for the intrusion of her native servant who opened the door, hastened to the table, and with the air of a trained menial made preparations for our evening meal.

CHAPTER IV.

I awoke on the following morning to hear a peculiar scraping noise in the room that was still in the gloom of the arctic forenoon, and oddly enough it did not seem unnatural that I should be there resting in a comfort-

able bed in a very comfortable room which was not uncomfortably cold because of a half-opened door leading to the hallway in a well-heated house.

The noise continued. I leaned upon an elbow, lifted my head, and discovered Jack in the painful act of shaving his face. Shaving away a beard of weeks' growth is trying enough for a man with full use of his eyes: but for one who is blinded and works by touch I presume it must be a harrowing operation. I could gather this from muttered objurgations, subdued lest by full explosion they disturb me.

"Hello! Why for the remarkable toilet?" I queried.

He turned toward me, with razor in hand.

"Wish to the Lord I could see! It seems to me we're in a place where it's a sort of duty to at least look clean. Would you mind taking a look to see if I'm unpresentable?"

He wasn't, by any means.

We were awaiting our breakfast in the main room when Madame Malitka appeared, and I observed that she was attracted by the change in Braith. She gave me a subtle feeling that she had sufficient femininity left to consider her own toilet. I saw her eyes glance downward at her own apparel, and then back at Braith's bandages. Upon me she bestowed no more than a glance. Why should she? She was young, I a gray-haired, hard-visaged man with the scars of my wanderings and my years ineradicably imprinted upon what had never been a comely face. I doubt if her years were more than thirty. My partner was almost young enough to be my son, a bare thirty-three.

"You will be pleased to learn that your dogs are well on their feet again," observed Madame Malitka, "and that within a few days they will be as good as ever. That leader of yours has too much timber wolf in him to make friends readily, but he permitted me to caress him this morning."

"You have been out to see them—this morning? So early?" I asked, pausing to stare at her.

"Yes. I make a round of the village every morning, long before this hour. Natives are but children, after all. The only way through which they can be disciplined is by an example of regularity. I set their tasks, hear their complaints, render judgment in disputes. Sometimes it requires much patience, and—the demands for things that hurt! But one must not flinch."

She frowned, and then, recalling herself as if from unpleasant memories, diverted us from the topic by making inquiries concerning the broader affairs and happenings of the outside world from which we had ventured. It was not until we had finished our breakfast and the brief cold glare of a mid-winter arctic sun had arisen to its strongest light that she turned to me.

"Your friend," she said, "must not, of course, venture out. Within a few days he may; but now he must submit to his bandages and treatment. I will care for him. But, if you feel restless, you may move as you will. Your dogs are being kept by Peluk, the shaman. If you wish to see them, or him, his house is the last down the street you see—the big double cabin at the end."

I didn't know whether to take this as a leave of absence or a discharge at liberty. But I was eager for a more studied inspection of our unique surroundings.

"Yes," I admitted, "I should like to take a walk. I do wish to see our dogs. They've saved us, after working for us until they were but hide and bone."

I garbed myself for outdoors and walked slowly along the village street. Now that my brain had come back to its own, I marveled more than ever at what I saw; for here were indubitable evidences of orderliness and cleanliness. There was not a cabin that did not have at least one glazed window. To one who has never been in such a country as that great interior was at that time, this may seem a strange cause for amazement; for only the experienced can know that a pane of glass was far more difficult to obtain than gold. Another strange feature was that the cabins were not crude hovels, but were well constructed with corners turned in the curious fashion employed by none but Russians. This led me to believe that at one time or another, perhaps prior to the Alaskan purchase, a Russian trader or perhaps officer with his tiny garrison has founded this place.

Readily enough, I found my way to the shaman's house, escorted by a pack of curious dogs, great, well-fed beasts somewhat crossed into the wolf breed—an increasing pack that appeared none too friendly. The shaman himself came rushing from his door to scatter them with guttural shouts.

"You better," he commented. "Feel all right now? You come see dogs?"

When I told him that I had he led me around to the rear of his cabin where, in a warm little outhouse, half cellar, but cozy and comfortable, my faithful friends charged round me with that welcome which not even a man may surpass. I knelt among them patting the upturned heads, caressing the bony bodies, talking to them.

"Very good. Pretty soon all right. Few days plenty grub," the shaman said as we closed the door and he led me toward his own house. "You come in while? Ummh?"

Secretly eager to learn whether the outward indications of thrift and cleanliness were maintained within, I followed. I was scarcely surprised, so accustomed had I become to the unexpected in this extraordinary place, to find that the house was floored with what was evidently worn, whipsawed timber, that it contained rough but substantial furniture, and that there were not wanting many small devices of civilization, including an alarm clock and a cheap little phonograph that from its prominence of position I deemed to be the shaman's most prized possession. A squaw, fat and ungainly, but clean, and dressed in denim, stood stupidly staring at us until reminded of her manners when she grinned fatly and said, "How-do."

The shaman insisted on my taking a seat.

"Very good you found trail here. Lady Malitka very angry by those trail. Young men go with no word from her or me—who must say 'yes' before anybody come or go."

"What's that?" I asked, to make sure that his hesitant painful English had not been at fault. "You say no one can come or go out of this valley without madame's or your consent?"

"Yes. That it. Just so."

"But—but suppose any one refused? Suppose they came or went, anyhow?"

"Oh, we killum! That's all," he said complacently. "Long time now since must killum any one. Two mans from village long way off come here. Make lies. Get one mans here who think like go with 'em and maybe come back with lots mans. We find out after they slip 'way. Klootch tell what she hear talk. Me take ten men. Go after. Very hard work. They go fast. Nine sleeps before we can catchum and shootum. One man white, same as you. Very big man. Scar on face. Black beard. Black hair those man had."

For an instant I did not speak in response to this callously told tale; for in my head ran that description. It pretty accurately fitted that of Barnes, whom, or news of whose fate, we sought. Had this been his finish, after all? Seeking a place to establish his trading posts, had he come upon this well-made village, a remnant of staid and substantial Russian architecture that had, in its situation and substantiality, the ideal requisites for his purposes and plans? If he had, and could have established himself here and then thrown out radiating outposts, he certainly might have commanded in time a little kingdom that even the great Hudson's Bay Company could not destroy. And by the time the company learned of it, for it was far distant from their nearest posts, his ramifications would have been unassailable.

For the moment I did not consider the possibilities of our own peril; but now they recurred to me, together with a vague speculation on the extent of mercilessness that apparently lay masked in the heart of Madame Malitka. The thought prompted me to caution.

"Of course natives from other villages can come here?" I questioned idly, as if not much interested in this ruffian's story of murder.

He grinned meaningly, almost happily at me, and his eyes twinkled as if with savage delight.

"Nope. Know better. Keep long way off. Afraid. Think lady very bad spirit witch. Makeum die if come, maybe makeum die if talk. All keep long way—many sleeps off. Many not know that village here at all. Think, many years ago, this place got spirits—what you say—ghosts."

Suddenly it dawned on me why I had been unable to follow the map given by that ancient native so many miles away. Out of his kindness of heart that aged man had given me a map to the best of his ability, showing us not how to reach this village and Malitka, its evil spirit, but how to avoid it! Truly our escape from starvation had been by the mere accident of restlessness of some of her young hunters who had broken her hard laws and left a trail.

Fearing that my face might betray my anxieties, I asked him casually where he had learned to speak English.

"Lady Malitka teach some. And some I——" He stopped, as if weighing his words

and then added: "Me shaman. When need things from outside—clocks, music machines, flour, medicine, white man's clothes, matches, tobacco—all that—must go myself. Must speak little English. Ummh? So learn all can. Me travel far. Once go on big ship to Juneau where mining machines go clumpety-clump all time. You been Juneau?"

His sharp eyes that had been inspecting the floor suddenly fixed themselves upon me as if he were a lawyer in cross-examination.

"No," I admitted, "I have never been there. Why?"

He chuckled heavily and said: "When go to Juneau, buy things lady wanted, paid gold. White miners try find where got gold. When leave, follow long time. Hard work loseum. Think maybe they never got back to Juneau."

There was a grin of significance in his final sentence that did not escape me, and warned me against inquisitiveness. I took advantage of the rushing entrance of a small boy to twist in my chair and look away. The boy paused, regarded me doubtfully for a moment, and then with a delightful little smile came forward and made friends. I caught the chubby, black-eyed little chap up to my knee, and for the moment forgot Peluk. I was made aware of his regard by his next words.

"Very funny, ummh? That boy not make friends so easy most times. Him got no father, no mother. Him got nobody but her——" He pointed a strong finger at the old woman who had suddenly approached and, as if horrified by the child's familiarity, clutched him from my arms and carried him, rebellious, away.

"That old devil," said the shaman with a grin, "my mother's sister. Keep my house. That boy's mother her daughter. His father got squaw already. So when that boy born, Indians go kill boy's father and kill boy's mother. That natives' law. Unnerstan'! That boy what you call bassard, ummh? What think now?"

"That, Peluk," said I, somewhat overcome with indignation, "is not the boy's fault. He may grow up to be better than any of those who killed his mother. The brutes!"

"White man not do same?" he questioned me. And then, when I did not immediately find words to explain the white man's attitude toward the illegitimate offspring of their tribes, he added softly: "Think your people not likeum either, ummh? Maybe not kill father, mother, but makeum what you call hell for child what not can help itself, ummh?"

And then I couldn't answer; for it was true. With an absurd sense of being cornered by a mere savage, I blurted, "I don't give a damn what others do! I'll not visit the sins of the parents on their children who can't help themselves."

"Ummh? Say again. Slow. No can unnerstan' when speak quick," he said, and I repeated it. He made no response or comment.

"So you did as I would have done—took the boy in and cared for him, did you?" I asked when the wait became irksome.

"Yes," he said. And then, after a time, "And Malitka stop all that kill girl who go bad. Same with many things. Maybe Indian not lissen to me but—what lady say—well, mus' be done."

"And suppose they didn't obey what she says?" I queried, more interested in his reply than he knew.

"Then they die. We killum," he answered without hesitation.

"Good Lord!" I cried aghast. "You kill any one that doesn't do what you tell them to do?"

He stopped and then at my look of horror became more eloquent.

"You think not best, ummh? Fool! Many sleeps away, Indian village where live dirty. Starve when bad winter. Die. Here—no. There cold. Here—warm. There bad barrabara—here good cabeen. There dirty—here clean. There nothings—here rich. Long time natives here not unnerstan'; then, bimeby, see this way best. Lady tell us. We do. So what lady says, muss be done, ummh? Me shaman. Makeum do. If don't do, muss killum. Now everybody see this way best. Faugh! Other Indians nothing! We reech, beeg! Got all this!"

He waved his hand around with a gesture that embraced all his proud possessions and evidence of wealth. I suppose that from his viewpoint he was a Crœsus with everything his heart might wish at his command. Perhaps he was right. There are dwellers in other places who know neither bodily comfort, freedom from want, nor satisfaction of possession. A great and powerful man this urbane, semibarbarous savage who was

prime minister to an accepted and respected queen.

I returned to the big house at the end of the street with many queries in my mind and many doubts; but of one thing I was convinced, that only by cultivating the shaman to a point of confidence could I gain proof of what I suspected, which was that the white man he and his companion trailers had killed was Barnes. I had reached the very doorstep before I came to the conclusion that it were better for me to retain what knowledge I had gained to myself for the time being, lest Jack, if he knew of it, might so change his attitude as to lead our dangerous hostess to alter her mind about our departure. I found them quietly conversing, and it was difficult for me to think that this undoubtedly cultured and apparently refined woman could, on occasion, calmly pass sentence of remorseless death on any who crossed her will.

CHAPTER V.

I shall never be certain what the outcome of our visit to Madame Malitka's village might have been had her prediction that my partner's eyes would recover within a few days been fulfilled; for, considerably to my alarm, it developed into something like iritis. I could do nothing to assist or relieve him; but madame's ministrations never ceased, as if beneath her calm and habitual coldness there dwelt a full and womanly sympathy. Time hung heavily on my hands, for I have never been one who can long content himself with books, but who craves outdoor activity.

I became a commonplace object to the natives, to their children, to the very dogs. I wandered at will, and there were at least a score of houses in that settlement that at some time I entered. The evident distrust that at first marked the demeanor of the shaman's people gave way to tolerance, as if being accepted by both madame and him were sufficient.

One brilliant moonlight night I was awakened by the clamor of the village dogs, and the barking of others in response. So keen becomes one's curiosity and interest in trifling things under such humdrum conditions that I climbed from my bed and went to the window. It opened to the rear of the great house, looking out across a considerable clearing to the foremost phalanxes of the great dark forest and to the chill, jagged mountain peaks that stood sentinel in the far distance over this secluded valley. I saw coming out of the dense forest where I had never surmised there could be any trail a dog team of the great strong beasts that were so carefully bred in this settlement. They were harnessed in doubles, with a huge, gaunt, wolf-crossed leader at their head—nine in all, while on the sled I made out the dark figure of a man at rest while another ran behind at the handlebars.

They came rapidly, the dogs running in the long wolf trot as if eager to gain a known home. Then with another swirl there emerged another identical team, and, to my further curiosity, two more, all racing inward. They passed almost beneath my window, so close that I could see the sharp steam of panting breaths, the little skirl of frozen snow dust arising from the hurrying pads and the lolling tongues.

I turned toward Jack, expecting him to have been aroused by the night sounds; but I presume that madame had given him a potion to ease his pain, for he slept, and I did not disturb him. For a long time I lay in my bed, staring at the dimness of the moonlit room and puzzled by what I had seen. It was evident that teams such as these were used for heavy hauling and not for speed; that they had come from some place unloaded and that their journey had been one of many miles, for otherwise they would not have traveled so late into the night.

After a time the faint noises, and the barking of village dogs died away into that profound silence that never seems so compact, so deathly, as in the great North. I heard as if far back in the forest from which these ghostly travelers came the long-drawn cry of timber wolves, as if they had accompanied them in that journey, and now, baffled, feared to venture beyond the darkness of the forest in the hope of prey.

In this strange refuge of ours I learned discretion; but it was difficult when we three were seated at breakfast not to mention the happening of the night. Madame, calm, neat, competent as usual, seemed unusually silent. It was not until she was pouring the coffee, which was a table task she intrusted to none other, that she said, "I trust you were not disturbed in the night by—by anything?"

It was that instant's hesitation that put

me on guard. I looked up at her and found her eyes directed to mine with more interest than her words had implied.

"I thought I heard wolves in the night," I said. "But perhaps I merely dreamed of them. I have never before heard any—that is, since we came here."

I thought I discerned a look of relief in her inscrutable eyes.

"Yes," she said, bestowing calm attention to her coffeepot, and shifting her regard, "it must have been a dream. There are wolves sometimes, I am told, in the depths of the forest behind us, but they seldom venture this far. The villagers have no occasion to go that way, so I suppose that whenever a wandering pack comes it remains unmolested."

She paused, and then with unwonted volubility said that the great game regions lay in the opposite direction, and discoursed on the reasons therefor.

"The younger men of the village then, I take it, go that way for their hunting and trapping?" I said, as if not much interested.

"Yes, meat as well as furs for trading must be had somewhere," she said in an equally casual manner. "Of course, in the summer season they lay in catches of salmon which they smoke for storage, and in the fall seasons they take grayling in quantities. The fish you are eating have been frozen for more than three months."

"How far distant is the nearest trading post?" I asked, and saw her slowly raise her eyes as if questioning whether there could be anything concealed in my words.

"Oh, a long way from here, to the northwest," she answered evasively, and immediately addressed Jack as if to end my inquisitiveness.

But the thought ran through my head as I sat in silence and enjoying a most excellent breakfast, that the dog teams I had seen in the night came from due south. Long after the meal was concluded I sat pretending to read, but thinking. I recalled seeing my snowshoes, whose worn webs had been repaired during our enforced rest, hanging on a wooden peg out at the end of the house.

I said nothing to Jack after she had left for what I knew was her daily round of inspection, but slipped quietly out and took the familiar long frames from their hooks. I kept the house between me and the village, slipped my feet into the new thongs, and then, as if merely curious to try them, lest some of the servants in the house be watching, trudged away toward the southeast, making pretense now and then to readjust a thong and thus finally gained the edge of the forest into which I leisurely moved until screened from sight. I plunged into it for some hundreds of yards, and then turned due west on my course, and with long, free strides traveled a mile or more before I came to a greater surprise.

I saw, cut through the woods, a clean, narrow roadway leading southward, and in its middle lay the new tracks of the sleds I had seen the night before—snows trampled by the paws of many dogs and interlaced here and there with the marks of moccasined feet. I fell back into the forest and for more than two hours skirted that beaten trail; but never once did I venture out to where my own traces in the snow might conflict, or lead to detection.

I came to a place where the forest thinned, and saw that the worn trail was now ascending and leading to a pass in the high mountains that could not have been seen from the village, so abrupt and sharp was its opening. I was mystified by this matter. I wished that I had time to follow it farther; but time was already spent if I wished to return so that my absence might not attract attention. And so, reluctantly, I swung back and retraced my course, thinking of some excuse I might offer that would account for my considerable outing. I remembered then that we had several times had upon the table the pine hen of the North, a game bird that properly cooked is most edible. I decided that this might prove my pretext.

That afternoon I loitered with the shaman, but found him strangely occupied and aloof, and eager to have me go. Deciding that I was in his way, for some reason or another, I returned to the house and did actually become interested in a novel that twice before I had attempted to read. We played chess, madame and I, that evening, and as usual she beat me. But now and then I thought she prolonged the game as if to keep me absorbed. It was late when we retired but, thinking over the mysteries I had encountered, I could not sleep. It must have been nearly midnight when I heard outside a single "woof" of protest, as if a dog had come in contact with another, and

jumping from my bed I again stood at my window.

In all that day I had seen in the village no sign of anything unusual—not a strange dog, a strange sled, or a strange man. But now laboring through the moonlight I saw the teams straining into harness, pulling heavy loads, while in front of each walked a man, and behind each another clung to and steadied the sled handles. Again they passed, ghostly, slowly, until the blackness of the trees outlined against the snow-clad clearing swallowed them from sight. They were off into the unknown trail that I had traced for so many miles. Of their goal I was curious; but again my reason told me that either their destination was very distant, or so close at hand that they expected to reach it before the wane of the moon. The latter seemed most probable.

I resolved to wait another day that any lurking suspicion might be allayed, and then to learn, if I could, whither that trail went and why. Such knowledge might eventually prove vital for our escape. My pretext of being ennuied by lack of movement and my announcement that I proposed to travel eastward into the rolling highlands to spend a whole day shooting pine hens was accepted without comment. I took the precaution to tell the shaman, who grinned and said that they could most likely be flushed on the ridge that he pointed out. That, too, was eastward, quite away from that southern trail. He offered to go with me as guide and companion; but when I told him that it wasn't worth while, and that maybe I shouldn't go as far as the ridge, he relaxed into fat contentment and crudely philosophized on the follies of exerting one's self in a temperature of thirty degrees below zero when it was possible to remain warmly sheltered.

I was off at as early an hour in the morning as I dared, and swung out again in a false direction. I lost no time, after the forest had hidden me, in turning westward, and settled myself to do my best in what might prove a long chase.

The trail, when reached, I found too cut and lumpy to permit of as rapid progress as I could make on its sides, and so, "letting myself out" to the utmost, enjoying the movement in the cold, pure air, and strong after my rest, I made most excellent time until I reached the point where I had abandoned the chase on my first visit. The trail now led through a narrow valley, bordered with high rolling hills. Its ascent became much steeper and harder.

It turned upward to one side and passed completely over a foothill, thence downward a short distance and into what I judged to be in summer a watercourse. The rolling hills gave way to savage mountains, rough, tortuous, and reaching coldly upward like innumerable Titanic needles thrust into the sky. In some places the trail passed between cliffs high and sheer and with a cleft so narrow that one could almost stretch his hands out and touch the opposing walls of rock. The windings were so frequent that seldom was it possible to see more than thirty or forty yards ahead, where nothing but interminable walls were visible as if there the passage must end; but invariably on coming to these places another narrow way would be exposed, up which the laden sleds had been toilfully dragged. I understood now the necessity for two men and such splendid teams for each outfit.

Up, up, through gorge after gorge, each successive one seeming steeper, I climbed until I reached one where the signs disclosed that the laden sleds had been unpacked, the contents carried piecemeal by hand, and even the empty sleds pulled upward by main force. The place was almost as steep as the pitched roof of a house and could be scaled only by the employment of hands as well as feet. For a hundred yards it bored upward through a cleft that was at no time more than ten or twenty feet in width and whose black walls were so sheer that not even light-falling snow had found lodgment to soften their rugged faces. The outlet appeared to end abruptly in the blue sky between two walls, exactly as if one stared through an enormous gateway to the heavens.

It was difficult for me, traveling light and carrying nothing but shotgun and snowshoes across my back, to make that final ascent, and I was panting heavily when I reached the top, where I halted in swift amazement. I jumped backward impulsively, threw myself on my belly and rested. When my breathing had returned to normal I first divested myself of snowshoes and gun, took off my cap and powdered it white with snow from the trail, likewise my shoulders, and edged upward again until I could rest there and look.

In front of me the trail led downward

over a descent almost as abrupt and steep as the one I had just climbed. I beheld its end, a veritable cup in the mountains far beneath me—perhaps a thousand feet below. But that was not the strangest part! I looked down upon the snow-laden roofs of cabins from whose chimneys smoke, gray and pale, curled lazily upward. The cabins appeared, from the distance, to be of the same substantial log structural form that distinguished the village from which I had come. Of these houses there were a score, one being much larger than the others and with chimneys at each end.

The presence of this secret camp was instantly explained to an experienced eye by several great black heaps some hundreds of yards beyond it. No snow was on these, and near each stood the familiar form of a windlass, at two of which men toiled and twisted, hoisting the pay dirt from shafts in the earth. A great pile of sluice boxes carefully stacked, probably at the end of the previous season's work, added further proof that here was gold placer mining on a considerable scale.

As I rested, there flashed through my mind the danger of the position in which my curiosity had placed me. I had ventured into the lion's mouth if ever any man had. Here was the explanation of many peculiarities and mysteries that were integral parts of Madame Malitka's domain; the evasiveness regarding hunting, trapping, and trading relations; the extravagant evidences of thrift and wealth in every Indian's domicile as well as her own; the rigid discipline of the inhabitants who were not even permitted to wander into the great barren beyond without special permission and then, doubtless, only when such journeys became imperatively necessary. It explained the establishing of a ghostly legend filling the superstitious minds of those natives who had heard of the place with dread and causing them to avoid mentioning it, visiting it, or approaching it. It gave the reason for the reception we two white men, starving, had endured when we blundered into this native stronghold and—yes—the interrogations to which we had been compelled to submit before being reluctantly succored!

It was but too plain now that, had we been merely wandering prospectors or explorers, sorely stricken though we were on that hour of our arrival, we would have been driven forth again into the great hopeless mercilessness of the steppes to certain death. Nothing could have saved us from that tortured end save the stern kindness of the shaman's men whom he would probably have sent after us to speed our demise.

For a moment, lying there on the snow, I cursed that strange, tyrannical ruler of this tribe; and then another recollection calmed my hatred, the thought that she had accepted our given pledges that never after our departure would we make known to living man what we had learned, or ever return. She had accepted us as men of honor.

It was a highly embarrassing thought. Honor? That implied that we as her unwelcome, but received guests, could not be expected to spy upon her doings or her motives. And here was I, skin-clad, snow-powdered, prone upon a hidden trail, and spying upon the great secret she strove to maintain! I, one of her guests, permitted to wander at will because she had trusted this honor of mine, although perhaps deeming it impossible that I might discover that which she so inexorably hid. I loathed my discovery and regretted that it had been made.

It was in this state of mind that I quickly crawled backward until detection from any wandering eye in the village below—eyes that are so quick to detect the merest, small movement in spaces so devoid of change—was rendered impossible. And then I resumed my light burden of snowshoes thrown across my shoulders and of shotgun in the crook of my arm and slithered back over the descent. I took pains to obliterate any stray mark of my passage. I took it for granted that in the great confusion of trampled snow any footprint leading upward would pass unobserved, and heeded only the effacement of my downward steps.

The way was very long and the work arduous before I came, in the dusk of the short arctic winter day, to a place where I could leave the trail and plunge into the shadows of the forest. Finally I reached the great belt of pine and fir forest which, owing to its density, was already dark. Here no faint light of moon or star might penetrate and here, off to one side, I heard the abrupt and warning howl of a great timber wolf, disturbed in its quest, uttering the far-reaching call of the pack and of the hunt! No casual wail of protest to the moon, this, but the fierce call that comes in the early dusk when unexpected prey has been sighted and hunger lends desperate courage to attack.

The hour was still early, when measured by hours in lower latitudes where now it could have been but mid-afternoon. But here, in this winter month on whose most benevolent day the sun barely approached the edge of the horizon, and then, unseen, slipped away as from an inhospitable land, it was late.

Once, some years before, I had heard that wolf cry in Siberia when going from one village to another in midday. And now I ran! Of what service to me the shotgun now lashed upon my back, when in my pockets were shells loaded with nothing more heavy than light shot!

It was well for me in that afternoon that I was trained as no athlete can be save through trail and stress, that I was physically endowed as but few athletes are, and that I was bodily replenished and fit. The first pack call came from the left; within a few minutes it was answered from the right. The first lean, dark shape I saw was to my right and running almost abreast. The wolf tactics, unless driven to that extremity of hunger where ferocity creates individual courage, are ever the same—to assemble the pack before making an attack upon mankind.

As I ran, panting but steady, a new and disturbing feature of my situation came to mind, which was that, inasmuch as my only chance for life rested in my reaching the village before I could be overwhelmed, I must take the most direct way which must inevitably bring me out near where the gold trail entered the clearing. It would be impossible for me to extend the chase through the forest and bear eastward so that I might emerge from the direction in which I had that morning started. Furthermore, if at last I were driven to fire, the report of my shotgun would in itself betray the direction of my course.

The wolf pack seemed to be aware of my intent and to know that if I reached the clearing first in that terrible race its prey would be lost; for now the animals closed in more recklessly as if preparing to spring. There was nothing for it but to fire. I surprised them by suddenly swerving closer toward them, and discharged both barrels at a great gray beast that led the pack. I surmised that the pellets could do him small injury even if capable of penetrating his coat of winter fur; but fortune favored me in that both charges must have found muzzle and eyes; my shots were answered with a loud howl of pain, the brute stopped and fell into the snow where it began writhing, and the pack, stunned by the explosion and for the moment terrified, hesitated.

Leaping away I ejected the empty shells and threw in two more cartridges. I do not know whether the beasts fell upon their fallen leader and canniballike devoured him, or whether they were for a few moments terrified into halt; but the thinning light betokening the edge of the clearing was plain ahead of me before they again came with a rush—and this time I fired one barrel after the other without halting. In a moment more I was out into the clearing, the dogs of the village in an enormous pack were giving tongue and bounding in my direction, doors were opening and natives were rushing forth with rifles and the habitual stillness gave way to a fierce clamor.

So ravenous was the wolf pack that it dared follow me a little way into the clearing, and again I was compelled to fire. The village dogs, brave to a certain point but themselves terrifled of the great wolves that make no more of killing a dog than a rabbit, stopped. Their Indian masters with shouts came on. Spurts of flame and the whistling of well-aimed bullets, made possible in that broader light of the clearing, were followed by the shrill howling of stricken animals. For an instant the wolves milled round in confusion, and then turned and fled back to the forest shadows, leaving two or three that gnashed and twisted in agony on the snow. The natives rushed in and dispatched these before any one addressed me. A larger shape that ran heavily, as if unable to race to my rescue as quickly as his younger companions, reached me and I recognized the shaman.

"You very good luck. Me tell you! No can unnerstan' so many wolves. Many years since him pack thees way so close village. Mus' be caribou scarce. Sorry not know wolves in mountains here. Then tell you better not go shootum pine hen. Too bad. But all right now. Ummh?"

The end of the great house was but a hundred yards away, and now I saw emerge from it madame, who came forward to investigate the cause of so much excitement.

"Ah, it is you," she said, and glancing around observed, "I see you have had a narrow escape from a wolf pack. Most unusual! It is the first time to my knowl-

edge that they have ever appeared in numbers in this valley. I wonder——"

She stopped as if suddenly alarmed by some thought and, turning from me, spoke quietly and rapidly to the shaman in his own tongue.

He, too, manifested signs of uneasiness, and I saw him glance in the direction of the gold trail. I knew then that both madame and he were apprehensive for the safety of that supply train that had gone forth but a couple of nights previous; wondering if the wolf pack had been sufficiently formidable to attack and destroy the gold workers in some of the distant reaches that I had that day seen. I could have answered their queries, allayed their fears; told them that the sled trails ran uninterrupted and true to that mining camp up behind in the rugged mountains. It was on the tip of my tongue to do so.

I wished afterward that I had. But I stood silent. And I maintained that silence after the excitement was gone and I found myself back in madame's stronghold, comfortable in body but perplexed in mind.

CHAPTER VI.

After the household was still that night and we had all retired, I lay for a long time considering the numerous aspects of our situation in the light of my day's experience. Jack had endured a day of suffering and madame had given him a sleeping potion. He moaned in his sleep. I would have given years from my span of life that night to have him restored to sight and strength, for I conceived our predicament to be one of danger. Moreover, I chafed against the peculiar restraints imposed upon me by his helpless condition. I decided that nothing could be gained by telling him of my discoveries, and that much might be lost, in that anxiety could but torture his mind and therefore retard his recovery.

"No," thought I, "it is futile and harmful to confide in him at this time."

I weighed the advisability of a frank conversation with madame; but there again was the difficulty of many strange barriers. Her coldness and aloofness, despite her unbending and steadfast courtesy and hospitality, did not encourage unlimited candor. On the contrary, they impelled one to reticence. And then another aspect of my day's venture presented itself with almost terrifying apprehension. Suppose that those runners, who would most certainly on the forthcoming day take the gold trail to reassure themselves of the survival of the mine packers, should discover signs of my having blundered into their great secret? Suppose that my own wood lore and wild craft had overlooked some little point that might lead them to suspect? Suppose that through mere hunter's instinct, or casual curiosity, any of the runners were to leave the narrow passage cut through that primeval forest and there find, within a hundred yards of its border, the trail of my webs upon the snow as I had gone and returned?

Too well I knew how in the deathly, motionless stillness and quietude of the Far North a snow trace remains unaltered as if engraved upon stone for weeks on end; sometimes until the heat of the late spring suns leaves that compressed snow standing in clear and readable form upon the very brown of the earth itself. Useless to pray for a swift change and raising of temperature that might bring another generous coating of white to conceal the marks of my journey. Nature has her own ways that are so seldom varied. My sole hope lay in the scales of luck. If my discovery were not exposed by an unkind chance, the day might come when we could travel outward unmolested, unsuspected, under the safe passport of this extraordinary woman who ruled this extraordinary domain.

If fortune went against us—— Then I could not conjecture the end.

It is difficult for me to recount the suspense in which I lived for the following forty-eight hours. I expected at any hour to be sternly confronted by Madame Malitka and Peluk, the shaman, accused, proven guilty, asked for my defense, and then given judgment that might perhaps involve execution.

When at the expiration of forty-eight hours nothing inimical had chanced and there was no change in the attitude of madame, I began to breathe more freely. In that time I had not again seen the shaman, but decided that if he had learned anything it would be most difficult for him, a superior savage, to conceal that knowledge from me. Accordingly I made it a point to visit his house. He welcomed me with his fat, friendly grin. The little boy came and mounted trustingly to my lap.

"You get all shootum want, ummh? Pine

hen no good when mus' be chase by wolfs, ummh?"

"Never again!"

Squatted rather than seated on a stool, Peluk was carving an ornate button of bone, painstakingly making thereon the head and horns of a caribou, and holding the round disk between his legs on a block of wood. I hoped for some further reference to my adventure, but he got up, crossed to a box on a shelf, and took therefrom one of the crude native drills made to revolve by pulling backward and forward a bowstring fastened to a tiny but sturdy bow, and began drilling the hole for an eyelet. I did not interrupt him and finally he stood up, triumphantly, and then most critically examined the finished specimen of his handicraft.

"Him very good button, ummh?" he asked. "Now got three. Bimeby make three more. Very nice, ummh?"

He had all of a small boy's exultation over achievement. I had no need to flatter him in my commendation. It was to me rather astonishing that those fat yet powerful fingers of his could be so deft and that his sense of form was so highly developed. There was much of the artist in old Peluk and his ways of doing things.

"If some time could catchum gold, make very fine button; but where could catchum so much gold, ummh?" he asked, and suddenly looked me squarely in the eyes. I thought I discerned in his a half-mocking light, but could not be certain.

"I thought you said one time that you went on a big ship to Juneau where you bought that phonograph and paid for it with gold? Couldn't you find more gold where that came from—enough to make a button?" I asked, calmly giving stare for stare.

"Ummh, yes, mebbe did so tell. Sometimes me heap big liar," he replied with his usual grin and urbane manner. The customary soft, musical guttural of his voice seemed a trifle lacking at this admission of mendacity. He thought for a moment and then added, "But little gold go long way. Sometimes, way up there many, many, many sleeps, native find some pieces of gold." He pointed northward and turned his head as if looking across long distances to where the gold had been found. Then with a little laugh he remarked, "What poor shaman do with gold? No can use gold for nice button when can get nice music box for same piece gold. Music box heap better than gold button, yes?"

"Of course," I assented, and stared out of the window and yawned.

"All white mans like gold. Heap like gold, yes?" he persisted, when I showed disinclination to discuss the matter further.

"Not all," I said.

For a time he pondered and then remarked, "I think that dam lie."

I scarcely knew whether to take this as an insult or not, but on glancing at his broad grin decided to take it as his only method of expressing disagreement, due either to lack of vocabulary or ignorance of a white man's insult.

"Not all of them," I insisted. "I have known many who cared more for other things. I know one man who learns much about trees, grass, moss. Another who is an entomologist, who——"

"What that mean?" he demanded sharply. "Anty—antyologis—what——"

"A man who gathers and saves bugs, flies, mosquitoes—maybe birds," I explained lamely, trying to make him comprehend.

His answer unwittingly betrayed another secret of the place.

"Ugh! Mebbe so! Mebbe so! One time, when I take sleds, go long way, many, many sleeps, whole moons—place call Kadiak. Great village mos' as big as Juneau. Go there, too, same as Juneau, buy theengs for lady—buy good knives, needles, rifles what you call—ummh!—cloths make clothes, kettles, teapot, all sort theengs. And I see man who catchum bugs, butterfly, takeum stickum on paper with pins. Heaps. Catchum plenty. But thees man say no care for gold. I think mebbe tell lie to find out where I ketchum gold what pay for theengs bring here. I think him not such fool as other white mans who ask many questions. All time ask questions where from come, where go, how come and—I think mebbe bug man smart and want know too much. Anyway, when go, he not one who follow us to try find where from come. Mebbe so bug man not like gold. Like bugs better. Humph! Head go bad mebbe. All same what you say—clazy?"

It came to me as he talked that I had stumbled on to another one of madame's extremely secret methods of purchasing what she wanted. Once it was from Juneau, many hundreds of miles away, and another time

from Kadiak, hundreds of miles distant from Juneau. By never sending her emissaries twice to the same place she minimized the chances of discovery. Knowing the nomads and natives of the earth as I did, I yet marveled at this extraordinary old Indian's daring in making journeys that would have appalled many of even the superior men of the white race by their unknown terrors and hardships. The shaman's boast made on that first day when he had gossiped came to mind, "Me go far," his way of asserting superiority—that he had been a great traveler. Aye, he had gone far! He had perhaps known the very long, hard trails over which Jack and I had painfully suffered and traveled, that trail that he must have taken from Katmai. I sought to induce my garrulous acquaintance to gossip further.

"Kadiak! Kadiak? You don't mean that you have ever been that far away?" I remarked. "It's a very long way—many sleeps—isn't it? Big mountains and——"

"And much water! Great waters!" The shaman rose to my bait of adulation. "Take big *umiaks*."

The *umiak* is a monstrous canoe of walrus or other skins that the coast natives of Alaska handle through seas in which even a small schooner might not survive. I have known of one that had twenty paddlers. Swift and sturdy they are, like the Dyak pirate proas of Borneo, and capable of much.

"Take *umiak*—many *umiak* to cross bad waters from Katmai to Kadiak. Wait for still day. Go fast. Paddle hard."

Intent upon another of his bone disks from which he planned to add another button to his collection, the shaman threatened to relapse into silence.

"And so," I queried, "when you left Kadiak the bug man did not try to follow?"

"No. But other white mans did. Many white mans."

He chuckled and then stood contemplating the bone disk in his hand. The light through the window, despite the pallor of the arctic day, appeared to slip round him and to touch the interior of his clean cabin, incongruous with its evidences of the two great extremes of barbarism and the latest achievements of science. It lingered over a sheaf of fish spears, bows and arrows hanging on pegs on one side, rifles and cartridge belts on the other, a pair of *mukluks* on the floor, an alarm clock on the shelf, and phonograph on a table.

"Many nights we wait to start. Many times start. Always white mans, hungry for gold, watch and start when we start. Bimeby when dark night we go. Very dark. Go very quiet. Make no noise. Dip paddle still—so! Get away. Bimeby paddle very hard. Paddle all night. Think all right. Think no white mans follow. Come day. You know place call Shelikoff water? No?"

He stopped and when I evaded his question looked at me sharply, and then made expansive gestures.

"Waters there very bad. Make very rough sometimes. Rough when that day come. Think mebbe not get across. Mebbe get die in water. Then see, mebbe mile behind, other boat. White mans boat. Follow to find where we get gold. But—bug man no there. Nope. Bug man not one of white mans."

He stopped as if considering the peculiarities of one who had other ambitions than gold and muttered something that sounded to me like, "Mebbe so! Mebbe some white mans no want gold. Mebbe bug man like better——" and then his voice mumbled away in diminuendo to silence.

"How do you know he wasn't one of the white men who followed?" I demanded.

His attention was scarcely distracted from the captivation of carving that crude bone disk into a lasting depiction of animal form when he explained, without bothering himself to look up.

"Oh, me know! Tell other *umiaks* go ahead to land. Make my *umiak* mans turn back. Row hard. Row fast. White mans in boat wait. Wait long time. Then think best better turn and go home—back to Kadiak. Mebbe sorry follow. No can tell. They row very hard. What good. Me have strong mans in paddles. Know how. Paddle fast. Too fast for white mans who—yes—very good. But we catchum. Got new rifles. Shoot very good. Shoot far. Bimeby one white mans stops. Falls in bottom. Other white mans stops, shoots back. Killum one man by me. Me shoots again. Shoot very good, me! Very fine shoot. White man go down in boat bottom.

"Two other white mans grab rifles. Shoot. Three other mans my *umiak* fall down—die. Very good young mans, mine. Make me mad. Me shoot two time. Catchum! Two time. No more!" He held up two fingers

to make certain that I appreciated his numerals and his marksmanship. "Both white mans go down. One fall on edge boat. Me go slow. Afraid mebbe white mans still shoot. No. No can shoot not any more. All *petituk!* Finish! Gone dead! So, sink boat. Put our dead mans in water. No can carry home to put in place where other dead—with bows, arrows, rifles, grubs, paddles by side on top logs. No can do. So put in water. Mebbe find way to Great Spirit without all that, ummh? What think?"

He seemed for the moment more absorbed in this spiritual question of his superstitious savagery than in any remorse for his actions. Inasmuch as I couldn't very well with diplomacy tell him that I regarded him as a callous old murderer of the very first class, I confined myself to the statement that probably the Great Spirit would understand and overlook the fact of their unseemly burial. Also that the Great Spirit could probably find them if he wanted them very badly. The shaman roused himself as from a reverie and lifted both hands with an air of benevolence and religious reverence.

"Yes," he said in the tone of a fine old missionary addressing a flock of hopeful converts. "Great Spirit see all things. Very good. Love all mans and mebbe some squaws. Make all mans love all other mans."

For that old ruffian with his oiled, musical voice to assume a sanctimonious air and dilate upon universal love and benevolence within three minutes of having blandly confessed to deliberate and rather wholesale murder, was a trifle more than I could endure. I gently put my boy friend on the floor, arose and buttoned my Mackinaw, and made for the door. When I left Peluk he was humming, with all the fervor of a zealot, an air that I presume must have been a sort of rude chant to his deity, and chipping, industriously, at his new button.

CHAPTER VII.

Madame was out on her rounds when I returned, and Jack, having endured a restless night, had not arisen. With hands in pockets I loitered restlessly about the big living room until I came to one of the bookcases which were merely painted boards in series of shelves. By chance my gaze fell upon an oilcloth-bound notebook that I had previously noticed, but had not examined. I took it from its place and opened it. Instantly it held my attention; for it was nothing less than a grammar and pronouncing dictionary of the native tongue. I proved this because I had picked up, inadvertently, several words of common and frequent use. The book was written in a minute, compact handwriting, with here and there corrections as if its compiler had sought exactitude with increasing knowledge.

It was an admirable work, the best I had ever seen on any tribal language. Throughout a considerable portion of my life native languages have fascinated me, and knowledge of them has sometimes been of imperative necessity. The distinct excellence and notable simplicity of this work, and its unusual method, interested me. I reflected that it was a quick method that could be applied to almost any tribal language on earth, and enthused with the thought I carried the book to my own room where I had an ordinary field notebook, and became engrossed in copying it.

Jack, in the meantime, had arisen and groped his way to the living room. Although the grammar was limited in scope due to the smallness of the native vocabulary, I had not completed it when Madame Malitka returned and the midday meal was announced. The thought of any secrecy did not enter my mind, but I put the book and my unfinished work into a drawer lest they be disturbed, or the book itself accidentally injured. I do not remember why I did not refer to it in our idle table conversation, unless it was that I was still thinking of it. Moreover, conversation between us three white residents of the great house had imperceptibly drifted until it was mostly confined to madame and my friend—perhaps out of respect to my habitual reticence and the fact that I am but a poor and unentertaining conversationalist.

Our meal was not a slow one on this day. A child was to be born in the village, and madame, in her combined capacity of village dictator and village doctor, did not long delay her departure. Nor was her absence unwelcome to me, although Jack now and then growled at his loneliness and objurgated his misfortune. Long before madame had returned from her mission I had completed my copy and restored the book to its original place on the shelf.

Thereafter, for days on end, I amused myself when alone by mumblingly memoriz-

ing the vocabulary, and by listening whenever possible to the native speech. There was but one feature that prevented me from putting my new knowledge to the test, and that was the fear that if it came to madame's or Peluk, the shaman's ears, they might believe me guilty of prying into that greater secret of theirs—a suspicion that to Jack and me might prove dangerous!

This listening reticence led to a most peculiar discovery, which was that the natives among themselves never referred to the secret mine, although totally unaware that I had mastered their tongue sufficiently to understand practically all they said. It was as if they were bound by some secret understanding and pledge; as if the subject were taboo even among themselves in their vast isolation and enforced security. This secret accomplishment I had so casually gained did, however, speedily inform me of Jack's and my status in the village. It was not reassuring; for I soon perceived that we were there on sufferance, and remained there unmolested merely through madame's will and orders. On one occasion I had most ample proof of this. It was when I ventured into a house where there were some Indian curios that interested me, learned that its owner, one of those who spoke some English, was absent, and overheard a querulous conversation.

The house itself was one of the best in the settlement. The homes of the chosen few who had been instructed in the English tongue always were—as if they were of the elect, superior to their fellow townsmen, selected for strange missions, envoys in great affairs, mighty travelers into the unknown and formidable beyond, men who were repositories for preserved secrets, and —men who could brave foreign dangers and remorselessly kill those who sought to intrude therein!

A gnarled and malevolent old crone, veteran of vicissitudes, of hard game trails and past starvations, disdaining the innovation of chairs and squatted morosely in the corner of the room upon the floor, addressed the woman who was evidently her son's wife.

"Why come these two white men?" she demanded, peering at me with rheumy eyes that doubtless had suffered in the smokes of many barrabaras and many camp fires. "Why did they reach here? Why are they still alive—the one who is with us and that other who is blind in the great house? Has the arm of Peluk weakened and grown fat and slow? Have we no longer a *tyune?*"

"Hush, mother! Hush! It is by the will of the great lady that they be left as they are. Peluk is still chief. But the wisdom of the great one bids us be friends with this and that other who is blind."

For a little time the figure in the corner was silent and thoughtful, while I, pretending to have understood nothing, inspected a carved walrus tusk hung upon the wall. And then with an indescribable wail like a lament for the lost, the old hag began rocking to and fro, mumbling dolorously, rebelliously:

"Ayia! Ayia! Ayia!"

To me it sounded akin to the cry of the jungle dwellers of far eastern India, or the cry of bewailment of South Sea Islanders from which latter, perhaps, this tribe had sprung.

"You know not as I, who am so old!" she muttered. "White their skins—black their hearts! Do I not know? Many sleeps, many moons northward, they came and took from us furs, giving much that, not knowing thereof, we had never wished nor prized. They took the furs that kept us warm. They gave therefor strange goods and foolish things, and a drink that made our people mad. We died, up there, we of the broad and happy lands, because they came. Furs they wanted. Then came gold. For that they, too, went mad. Comes to us one who knows all this—the great lady—whose brain is cunning as the fox, who shows us the way. Do we live as we did, dying when there was no game, abiding in the earth in winter, fishing in rivers when the sun shone? And now this great one goes mad! Peluk has gone mad. He should slay. The dead tongue never speaks. It is good that I who am old must soon die! *Ayia! Ayia! Ayia!"*

The wail died away. The younger woman continued her household affairs. I passed outward through the door. I was profoundly disturbed by the indications that at least some of the natives clamored for our lives; for surely the old crone could not be the sole one who was rampant with hatred. There might be many others more physically capable of carrying desire to execution. Thus ruminating, I was convinced that our sole chance to escape lay in promptitude.

For some days Jack's eyes had been strengthening, and now he had discarded his bandages and protected his weakened sight

with nothing more than an eye shade. Ordinarily conversation in the living room lagged or flowed with a languid tranquillity. When on this day I returned, perplexed and apprehensive, I found the outer door not ajar, but unlatched, and I suppose I entered noiselessly. I was brought up short by a sound that I had never heard before during our entire residence in that great house. It was the sound of madame's laughter. It came freely, as if she were amused by some utterance of my friend.

Since when, thought I, had he recovered or exerted his ability to amuse? How long had it been since last this quiet, austere woman had laughed? Standing there, pondering, I heard Jack's drawling tones, and again another outburst of her laughter, musical, caressing, free. I turned and closed the outer door sharply, stamped the light snow powder from the soles of my moccasins, hung my cap on the great antlers of a moose that served as hall rack, and entered.

It was as if my advent induced restraint and brought an end to congenial and oft-repeated conversations. Madame was seated in a great chair on one side of the fireplace, Jack on the other. He had discarded his eye shade and looked slowly around as I entered and his time-tried and time-proven affection was in his voice as he welcomed me.

"Hello, old sobersides! Where have you been? Out glaring at the Indians or staring at the tops of the hills and wondering whatever's behind 'em? Pack itch again, I suppose! Want to be off somewhere."

He turned toward Malitka and said whimsically, "Madame, this sober, untalkative, unsmiling friend of mine might be the original Wandering Jew."

Uttering some commonplace, politely banal reply to his banter, I dropped into the most convenient chair. That unexpected sound of unrestrained laughter had aroused me from a state of placid—no!—of disturbed lethargy. I studied our situation as I had not theretofore while those two others in the room fell into a most casual conversation. I don't to this time recall anything of what they said. I think it was something pertaining to the breeding and handling of dogs. Think of it! Dogs!

It is possible that my anxieties, suspicions, and surreptitious knowledge combined to make me unreasonably secretive and hesitant to act. I didn't know what to do. That is bald truth! Knowing my partner's impetuosity, his method of daring everything and going direct to confront any crisis or danger, I doubted if I could trust him with my entire confidence. Once, in Tibet, where the exercise of nothing more than tact, diplomacy, and the preservation of an undisturbed demeanor might have rendered our pathway smooth, he had proven unequal to the task of concealment and betrayed us by sheer inability to play for a very little while his part. That failure cost us much suffering. He was candor itself, in everything he undertook or did. I concluded that I must study the conditions betrayed by that laugh, that cessation of conversation when I entered the room.

My opportunity did not come for some days, because I dared not discuss the matter with him. I suspected at least two servants in the house of understanding some English, and of keeping a silent and perhaps listening watch over us. I was not even certain but that this espionage extended to ac tual eavesdropping. And so, being cautious, it was not until the day that Jack could venture out into the open for the first time, and we were well away from the great house and the possibility of being overheard, that I broached the matters uppermost in my mind.

"Madame Malitka is a remarkable woman," I remarked casually.

"By Jove! She is!" he answered with enthusiasm. "And I want to tell you something else. I think her about the finest woman I have ever known in all my life. Marvelous! Don't you think her the most beautiful woman you have ever seen?"

"Yes," I admitted slowly and without looking at him, "she is—well—at least good looking."

"Lord! She's more than that!" And then he laughed as though at my lack of discernment. "You old misogynist. I might have known that you have probably never so much as taken the trouble to look at her—or any other woman, for that matter. It makes me think of the time you and I saw the woman accidentally unveiled in Cashmere and I stopped and gasped and you went——"

"But—we're not in Cashmere just now!" I interrupted. "Madame Malitka—I wonder if she could be entirely trusted. I wonder if——"

"I'd trust her with my life!" he exclaimed quite as if defending her from an asper-

sion. "Look here, old man, if you've got any bees in your bonnet about her, shoot them out. I don't know how she got here, or why. A gentleman can't ask his hostess questions of that sort, can he? He must let her volunteer them, if they are to be mentioned at all, mustn't he? If you care to know how I regard her—and here let me remark that I have talked with her, and been alone with her, and studied her a lot more frequently than you have!—I'll tell you frankly that I'm for her."

He had halted in the very middle of the street and faced me, bending his handsome head a trifle to adjust that difference in stature between us.

"What have you got up your sleeve?" he demanded at last, in our old familiar vernacular. "You don't like her, do you?" And then when I did not immediately answer, laughed as if at an absurdity and thumped my shoulder with one of his big, fur-protected hands. "Come on! Don't be a damned fool!" he exclaimed, turning away and resuming his stride, while I, a little in the rear, trudged after him.

But I wasn't walking carefree, for now I was positive that I dared not tell him what I knew, what I suspected, what I feared.

"In any case, what I think of Madame Malitka, or the others, doesn't count," I said. "But what to me is important is that we get away from here as soon as we can. We came up here into this country to learn what we could of Harris Barnes. That's what we are paid for. Here nobody knows anything about him, and of him we can learn nothing. We've got to go on—out into the northwest. We are rested. Our dogs are rested. You will soon be able to travel. And so—all I can say is that we must begin to think of a start."

I saw reluctance and disinclination in his face. His aversion was voiced in a single and indicative phrase.

"There's no rush about it," he said, "because the snow holds for months to come."

"Not for us," I objected stubbornly. "We don't know how far we have to go. All we know is that Barnes must have gone on into the northwest. Off there, a long way off, lies the Bering Sea. He may have crossed the narrow straits and plunged into Siberia. We can travel only when the snow is hard and deep enough to cover the undergrowth. We must go."

I saw that he recognized my logic. He breathed deeply, as if in resignation, hesitated as though to find an alternative reason for delay and, finding none, was slow to reply.

"Yes," he soberly admitted, "we came up here to do a certain thing. We took money for it. We're obligated to do our best. Well—we will do it. But—by heavens!—I wish it were different!" He stopped as if to better regard me, and demanded, "When do you think we should go?"

"Not later than day after to-morrow," I said. "Provided, of course, that the weather holds. And, if I can, I wish to get Peluk, the shaman, to go with us for at least a day or two as a guide."

"He'd be a good one," Jack muttered; "but why particularly him?"

"Because, if I can, I'd like to induce him to show me—something that he told me of—some days since."

I couldn't very well explain that I hoped to induce Peluk to lead me to the place where, in my belief, he or his followers had murdered a white man whose name, if my conjecture was justified, was none other than Harris Barnes.

"All right," he said. "I'll be ready when you are. But I'll tell you this, Jim, I'm lazy. I hate to go. And—Jim—I understand Malitka better than you do. And I like her!"

His familiarity of designation did not escape me. To him she was neither "our lady" nor "madame." She was Malitka.

To tell him all I knew would clearly be disastrous to our mission. He had become subject to her through the least logical and sane of all human influences, that of affection. Noble ideals, empires, wealth, the welfare of nations, and so on downward to merely individual aspirations, have been squandered, wasted, lost, or defeated at the foot of that fallacious, alluring, conquering shrine.

CHAPTER VIII.

Peluk proved anything but difficult to engage.

"Mebbe better I go show first pass in mountains. Very hard pass to find if not know how. But—mus' ask lady. No can go if lady say 'No.'"

And madame, after a moment's thought, gave her consent.

"What Peluk says is quite true," she admitted. "The first passage to the northwest

is difficult. Once through that you will find a stream which you must follow. I will give and explain to you a trail map."

I was somewhat perplexed by her readiness of consent, her evident intent to make our departure easier, her apparent desire to so direct us that we might avoid mishap. I was further astonished when from her desk she selected a map and handed it to me with the suggestion that I make a copy of it. I took it to my room where I might work undisturbed, and spread it upon the table. It did not present the appearance of having been used in trail work. It was too white, clean, unsoiled; but there could be no doubt that whoever had produced it was a skilled cartographer; and, furthermore, its copious explanatory notes were in English and in that same precise, small handwriting that I had observed in the grammar I had surreptitiously copied. It was while working on it that the thought came that perhaps I could lead the shaman to indicate on the map the place where was buried that white man who might be none other than Barnes. And then, if he could not be induced to conduct us to the spot, or if it was too far away, there was the chance that we could find it ourselves.

Peluk was at his everlasting task of carving when I visited him on the following morning. The day was a trifle brighter than usual. The light of the window against which he sat made of him an almost solid silhouette—no—more like one of the old Dutch paintings wherein the artist has permitted the light to flow vaguely around the outlines of head and face, to so disperse itself as to show a fold of a garment here and there, to suggest indistinct, almost elusive shapes. The shaman appeared like a monstrous idol, as he sat there against the light.

"Ummh!" he said. "Lady say can go? Very good. Think mebbe good you take four more good dogs from village. What you trade forum? Ummh? Think mebbe you got something I like. Ummh?"

This acquisition had been in my mind for days; but knowing the enormous value a native of Alaska places upon his dogs, I had deemed it beyond fulfillment. I offered him my watch. He grinned and produced one of his own, cumbersome, heavily incased in silver. In vain I tried to get him to accept a tiny camera, a gold match box well wrought and engraved. Always he inspected the proffered article, studied it for a moment, grinned, handed it back, and with a chuckle shook his head.

"Nossing more?" he queried, reaching for his unfinished button and carving steel, as if our attempt at trade had failed.

"Nothing I can think of. You don't care for money. You have a watch."

He glanced at me from the corners of his eyes without movement of his head, reverted to the button, held it up to the light as if to inspect it more closely, and said, "Mebbe got gun—what you callum—'volver? Shootum mebbe five, six, mebbe more times. Mebbe I like that for dogs, ummmh?"

Why on earth should this man covet my revolver? It was useless to me in that land where shotgun and rifle are the only firearms which can slay for food. I thought it but fair to enlighten him of its possibilities.

"A Colt's pistol doesn't shoot as far as a rifle," I explained. "Shoots good, but not like rifle. Understand. Shoots true. Kills. But—not a long distance. Did you ever shoot one?"

"Nope," he responded promptly. "But me shaman. Nobody got what you callum? Peestol! Yes that it! Peestol! Make me big mans here, ummh? Good! For peestol and cartlidges me give four dog. Very good dog. We trade?"

"Yes," I agreed. "I've got a pistol up at the great house."

"Other white mans got one, too? Mebbe more trade, ummh?"

"No," I said, "he has none. But I'll trade. I'd like to see the dogs."

"Good!" he said, arising with the startling quickness that seemed impossible to such a bulky form. "You go fetchum peestol. I go ketchum dog." He stopped, rubbed his chin with his fingers, grinned, and added, "Mebbe best say nossings anybody, ummh? Me like make quiet—see? Like make other Injuns think me big man when showum what got."

He put his hands to hips that were lean, despite his great shoulders and chest, and bent forward with an explosion of laughter. "Foolum some time mebbe, ummh?"

When I returned with the pistol he coveted, he held in leash four magnificent dogs with the great breasts and shoulders, the broad heads and powerful jaws of the cross breed of timber wolf and Malemute. They strained at restraint, moved restlessly and gracefully about his legs, and one of them,

deep-throated, yelped as though eager for the work and adventure of the trail.

"These good, ummh?" he asked.

"It's a trade," I replied. "Let them go and come inside. I'll show you how to work the gun."

He slipped the leashes and the dogs scampered away. In his house I laid upon the table a full box of cartridges, saw that the chambers of the revolver were empty, lifted and repeatedly snapped it at an imaginary mark. With that same slow grin he took it from my hand and stared into the muzzle. I warned him against that time-proven folly. I was surprised by his clumsiness and recklessness with even an unaccustomed weapon. I took pains to caution him, for which he evidenced gratitude. He put the revolver and the cartridges on a shelf, seemed to dismiss the bargain, and then started toward the window ledge on which his work of artistry and tools still lay.

"See here, Peluk," I said. "I have a map. You understand? Map! Paper that shows trails, villages, mountains, rivers, Understand?"

He turned toward me abruptly as if perplexed but eager to learn. I took from my pocket the copy which I had made through the kindness of Madame Malitka, and spread it upon the floor, kneeling over it, and endeavoring to instruct him as to its symbols.

"See, sun over there in summer. Down here in winter," pointing with my hand. "These marks mountains. These rivers. These trees."

"Ummh! Where get?" he inquired, standing stolidly above me as I knelt.

"Madame gave it to me. To show how to go. Understand?"

"Yes. Lady give. Make show how way go, ummh? Good! Can see. Here mountain pass," and he pointed with his stubby finger. "Here water, here woods. Heap remember woods. Make good camp for you, first sleep. You go mebbe—what you callum?—'leven 'clock forenoon. Be in edge woods five 'clock. Very good start. You like me go that far, sleep your tent, come home next day?"

I accepted with alacrity. If all went well and I could gain more of his confidence on the trail it was possible he would mark the map for me so that I could find what I sought. He volunteered to send our sled around in the morning to be at our disposal for packing. He entered into the adventure as if he were glad to take a winter's trail once more, after long inertia.

I was eager to escape, and was yet loath to pass from creature comforts, the last, I was well aware, that we might expect for many weary, toilsome days. The rigors of an Alaskan winter trail were anything but pleasant. We were more than usually silent that night. All of Jack's lightness of spirit seemed to have left him. He was restless and thoughtful. Madame, while at ease, had but little to say, now and then staring somberly into the fire with an unusual frown upon her brow, and I sometimes wondered if she repented of her original leniency that had spared our lives, and still more so of her permitting us to depart bound by nothing more than our pledge of silence. I wondered if she knew that there were those in her village who grumbled because we had been permitted to survive, and were held in check only because she was the law and its rigid executive.

Finally I went to our room and did what simple packing was possible to lessen the labors of the following morning. I do not think I was gone more than half an hour; but as I returned to the living room I heard her say, just as I opened the door, "No, no! Impossible. There is nothing you can do for me, my friend, save to forget everything regarding me and mine. That is final!"

Again, as on previous occasions, I felt that my entrance into their presence ended an intimate conversation.

The morning came, clear, cold, and with the lifeless stillness of that latitude in winter. We were packing our sled when to our surprise the shaman arrived with another, surveyed our outfit that was scattered on the snow preparatory to laying in, and abruptly and cheerfully took command. He was almost boisterously important. He ordered the curious villagers to stand back. He selected two or three stalwart young men and instructed them to divide the load between our sled and his own, explaining to us in English, "Dogs go easier when loads this way. If all load on one sled other dogs go too fast. Makeum all work."

He was so solicitous for our future that he unwrapped and inspected the great store of delicious, birch-smoked salmon, objected to some of it, and brusquely commanded one of his henchmen to go immediately and se-

lect something better. He saw that the dog fish was tightly packed, and well placed, the bundle taking up the forward end of his own sled. Our "grub box" he opened, and inspected to make certain that it was well filled. Even the battered and worn sheet-metal stove with which as well as a trail tent, madame had provided us, underwent his scrutiny before he would pass it on to be packed, the last of all our impedimenta on the nose of our sled. He personally saw to each lashing and then bade his men bring the dog teams, and declared everything in readiness.

When our dog team, augmented by the four magnificent animals he had sold me appeared, he supervised their harnessing and I saw that even our equipment had not been neglected and that there was not a band of leather, or rawhide, a knot or a stitch, that had not been repaired and made perfect.

"Feedum your dogs all time myself," he said, with his gentle grin that exposed his white, strong and perfect teeth. "When trade other dogs, putum all together so be friends in team. Now all go very good. No fight. Work good. This beeg one not very nice with mans don't know. Mus' make friends with him. Mebbe li'l' too much wolf, ummh? But strong! Go fast! Phwew! Like that!" And he gave a shrill indicative whistle through his teeth.

His own dogs were already "put in" to his sled. Great powerful brutes that wagged bushy tails and strained and whined and barked in their eagerness to be off. A slim, tall, but sinewy man stood quietly holding the leader of our dog team by its collar. I did not remember to have seen him before, but could not avoid noting his high cheek bones, aquiline nose, thin lips, lean face, and unwinking black eyes.

Holding the shaman's lead dog was another man, broad of shoulder, lean of hip, and suggesting an athlete fit to run a Marathon. We were ready to start. The shaman turned to Madame Malitka, who stood quietly observant in the entrance of the great house, with a great loose mantle, magnificently barbaric, priceless in value, made of the rare sea otter's fur, thrown across her shoulders, its voluminous folds held like a drapery about her by her hands, and its high collar turned up to protect her ears, neck, and cheeks from the cold. Her blue-black hair, massed and beautiful, was carefully coifed as usual. Her fine eyes, dark, impassive, directed themselves from one objective to another, as if to observe all. Her delicately but firmly molded lips remained immobile, until she spoke to us her farewell.

It was as if she dismissed us, forever, from her life, she to whom, it seemed to me, our advent and visit should have been epochal. We, the first men of her own white race with whom she had conversed for years, bringing, like strange argosies from the outer world that she must have known, rare freights of intelligence and communion. Her firm, white, and competent hand slipped from beneath a fold of that rarest of furs and was extended to Jack. He took it, held it for an instant, bent over it, and sought her eyes as if at the last he were beseeching her to relent and abrogate some decision.

"Peluk will start you well," she said quietly. "After that—you can find your way. I wish you a safe return to those places from which you came."

As if finally and irrevocably rebuffed, Jack's hand released hers. His eyes lowered after one direct look. He turned away and drew on his fur mittens, carefully adjusting the long gauntlets that protected his wrists from the cold. He did not look up until she said "Good-by," in that same restrained, calm voice, and then whirled impulsively and said, "It isn't really farewell, then, is it?"

"That is the better word," she said, and held her hand toward me.

I had already donned my mittens, but now pulled one off, remembering the courtesies of that civilization which she had cast behind. I took her hand in mine, and would have instantly removed it but that her fingers held mine for a moment as she stared at me thoughtfully. I thought the grasp was one of friendship and frank trust.

"Hathaway," she said, "you are gray and old and experienced. A block of ice! A peak of hardened snow—but—wise! I think —had you let me—I might have talked with you more than I have. But you did not. You will keep your word in good faith. I ask you to hold our friend—yes, my friend as well as yours!—to his pledge that once you have left here neither he nor you are ever to mention me, this place, your visit, or anything that you have seen, to any living being. Nor are either of you ever to come back. You are to forget. That is understood, is it not?"

"One can't forget at will," I replied with

exactitude. "But of this, Madame Malitka, you may be sure, that in all other things our promise holds. Is that sufficient?"

It seemed to me that we held each other's hands for an unnecessarily long time before she said, "Yes. That is sufficient. Good-by."

She did not wait to see our start. I looked at the group of natives standing obediently and respectfully aloof, with a white band of snow between us, our dogs and loaded sleds, and when I turned for a final glance at Madame Malitka, she had gone. The door of the great house was closed, as if we had been suddenly and permanently barred from its warmth and shelter.

The shaman gave a loud shout as of one starting upon great emprise. The Indians who had been restraining the leaders released their grips. The quivering, expectant animals abruptly strained into their harness, with lolling or baying tongues outhung between white fangs; the sled shoes after the last clutch as if reluctant to lose their holds upon the snow suddenly moved with tiny complaints and creaks of parting, and we were off. The natives of the village, children, squaws, klootches, and bucks, young and old, together hastened beside us through the street until Peluk threw up his hand and with one harsh, vibrant word sent them back. We slipped across the downward swale into the ravine that cut from sight the village and all who dwelt therein, ruler or subject, and all the noise died away save that which was of our own movement.

CHAPTER IX.

We were somewhat surprised by Peluk's generosity in bringing two native runners with him, for we had expected that they would leave us and return after a run of perhaps a few miles; but they did not, and took turns in tirelessly leading the way. It is one of the characteristics of even first-class dog teams that they will travel faster when a runner is ahead, exactly as if this human pacemaker stimulates them to greater effort. The shaman for the greater part of the time rode in princely state, lolling back in the rear end of his sled upon our tent and wrapped in a great red fox robe, blanket lined. Now and then when the "going was good," it was possible for Jack or I to ride while the others ran behind clinging to the handlebars.

We had not expected to halt, due to the late hour of our starting, until we reached our proposed camping site; but promptly at one o'clock the shaman uttered a loud shout that brought us to a standstill, and tumbled out of his sled. It was in a small clump of timber where fuel was easily obtainable and his two followers immediately began making preparations to start a fire.

"No good hurry go fast," Peluk explained. "Make camp early. Very good rest hour. Have tea. Good smoke. Good eat."

And so we contented ourselves as best we could, although the shaman prolonged our stop to nearly an hour and a half, gossiping in fragmentary English sentences, but never addressing the two natives who throughout the halt spoke scarcely a word to him or each other, preserving a stony silence. And yet, when we resumed our march and traveled through the afternoon, we were not sorry when we came to our camping place at an early hour, for our muscles had not come back to long endurance. We were glad to halt in the shadow of the great trees.

Here again the shaman's foresight was proven by the fact that it was scarcely necessary to unpack all our sled to make the camp complete. With that celerity and order that is learned only through the making of many camps, in less than twenty minutes the tent was pitched, fragrant pine boughs deeply laid over the snow for a carpet, the stove up and roaring, and the shaman cooking our supper. One of his men fell to cutting dead wood outside and the other to caring for the two dog teams that swarmed round his legs as he opened the dog salmon and partitioned it out, watchful that each animal got its share.

The shaman was in his most jovial, kindly mood as he squatted over the stove watchful of kettle, frying pan and coffeepot.

"Sometimes," he said reminiscently, as he poked the fire, "think like take long game trail again. When li'l' boy go many trails, many sleeps. But now—mebbe too fat, ummh?" he laughed and looked up at us with his sharp black eyes full of amusement. "Pant all same old fat dog! No can run fast. Much better like ride." He regarded me appraisingly and flattered me with, "You heap strong. Run good. No get too tired. Old man, too. Got gray head. Wise head. Same as old fox, ummh?"

I sat thinking hopefully of the possibilities of inducing him to either continue with

us farther or letting me know how I could reach the place where the white man with the scarred face had met his end; but my calculated, careful efforts to lead the conversation in that direction were futile. Patiently I recurred to the subject of the long trails again and again, even while we ate supper with keen appetites, and the shaman's two followers squatted in the corners of the crowded little tent silently stowing away their food; but I gained nothing. I persevered after the meal was over and we lounged on the outspread blankets and furs and smoked. I tried to exercise diplomacy.

"Peluk," I suggested, "maybe if you went with us a day or two more, you could find game of some sort—perhaps caribou, maybe moose. Why not come farther?"

"Me like go. But——" he began, and then stopped and fell to staring at the candle burning in its cleft stick, at the ridge pole of the tent, at the vent hole of the stove that blazed like a huge round eye full upon his massive, rugged face.

I fell to persuasion, and Jack did his best to assist my argument.

"We like your company, old sport," he said, and the shaman smiled at him as if appreciating his friendliness.

"No," he said at last. "No can always do what mebbe like to do. Lady Malitka speak, and—must do what lady say do. She say can come one sleep. No can come two or many more sleeps."

As if the mention of her name recalled other thoughts to Jack, he said no more, his eyes took on the vacant stare of abstraction, and he in turn stared at the glowing vent of the stove. I think that on me also her name had an effect, the effect of an unwelcome intrusion. I had been so secretly rejoiced at the ease of our escape, in the hope of being again freed from her menace and domination, that all day I had traveled in a state of relief. Probably the silence was longer than I appreciated, as we sat there, each absorbed in thought, Jack resting at length on a sleeping bag with his hands pillowing his head, the shaman squatted like an inanimate shapeless object, I sitting cross-legged on a fur robe, and, always in the dim corners of the tent nearest the fly those two mute and still figures of Peluk's followers. I recall that Peluk's voice aroused me with the shock of something unexpected.

"But think mebbe we can travel one day more together—that right word? Ummh? Together? Speak very good English, but—that word mean so; like this—ummh?"

He held his stubby powerful fingers out in a bunch, and when I agreed that this was the meaning of the word that to him was foreign, he complacently gestured with both hands and said, "Me speak very good English, ummh? Big word—that—together. So, mebbe can take trail one day more—together!"

He gloated over that simple word with an almost childish vanity; prodigiously proud of his accomplishment in our tongue. He rambled off his subject and asserted that many white men had told him that no other Indian in Juneau and Kadiak could speak so well. "Here!" he cried. "Know more as that. Lissun! Ah, bay, cay, day, eeah, ef, djhay, haitch, and——" he hesitated, perplexed and studious, and then gradually waved to one side the entire alphabet that he had threatened to inflict on us with a boast—"Can do all. All! Almos' can read white man's talk signs! Ummh? Me very big shaman. Very wise. One, two, t'ree, four, faive, seex, seben——"

He threatened to count numerals perhaps up into the hundreds, but I interrupted him with, "Good! Very good! And so you will go with us to-morrow?"

"Yes," he said, somewhat crestfallen at my lack of appreciation. "Go to-morrow. That, too, good word. To-morrow!" slurring his R's until they sounded like lame L's.

I had gained one step, at least, I thought as I spread the blankets out and prepared for sleep. I was secretly exultant over that slight gain, and—I was tired. The shaman yawned, crept on hands and knees to the opposite corner of the tent where his great fur robe was thrown, stretched himself out upon it, and rolled over and over until it was wrapped about him like a mummy case. His two men lifted themselves slightly, took from beneath them long parkas of the thin, flexible and not overly warm squirrel skins, pulled them over their heads like nightshirts, drew the "Sunburst" hoods, fox tail broidered, around their faces, sat down inside them, and resumed that josslike attitude of repose in their corners. The shaman's arm disengaged itself from his wrappings, stretched upward, and his practical fingers with a single deft grasp seized and extinguished the candle's flame. The round, staring, flickering blaze from the stove made a great

shadow upon the grimy white wall of the tent.

Soundless the forest, the outer and frozen world. So soundless that the slipping of a handful of snow from the overburdened and overcome branch of a pine tree was distinctly, sharply audible. The faint and final crack of an ember in the sheet-metal stove was magnified to explosiveness. Jack breathed deeply. The shaman snored. I felt for the fold of a blanket, and wished that I had chosen my sleeping bag instead, and fell asleep dreaming that I was once again in the blackness of a Berber tent in the Sahara Desert and gravely considering the condition of camels' worn and spongy pads.

I don't know exactly how long I slept, but it was certainly several hours, when, as if pounced upon by nightmare, I awoke terrified, struggling, fighting, and clutching two relentless hands that encircled my throat. I could not release them. I twisted legs and arms and body fiercely. Powerful hands held my feet; sinewy hands caught my arms. Not a human whisper could be heard. I might have been in the depths of the deepest seas and grasped relentlessly by an octopus. My arms were deftly pinioned to my sides. My feet were bound together, my knees tied, and I was so cunningly bandaged round my mouth that I was as dumb as if I had never uttered a sound. I was neither battered nor physically harmed, simply rendered helpless. Silence continued after my long-drawn sigh of surrender. I was left alone.

Straining my eyes I glared in the gloom. I could finally, though dimly, descry three shapes that, breathing heavily, rested and stared down upon me to make certain of my defeat. They moved, appeared to confer by signs, took positions and suddenly bent to their work over my friend who had slept serenely throughout that noiseless preceding struggle. I could even discern their method of attack—the figure that bent above the heedless and unprotected throat, his signal to the other two who had stationed themselves at head and feet—the swift pouncing of the hands to throat, and the equally darting clutch upon feet and hands at either end. I tried to roll over sufficiently to intrude my body between them and their victim, to so hamper their movements or distract their attention that Jack might have at least a fighting chance. They paid no more heed to my efforts than they might have bestowed upon the wild and impotent writhing of a fish thrown out of water upon the banks of a stream.

My partner was a far more powerful man physically than I. By some prodigious effort he tore loose the fingers that strove to throttle him, cast aside the hands that endeavored to bind his arms, kicked loose those that strove to encircle his feet. Once he got to his knees and elbows crying to me an alarm, shouting to me to help him and struggling desperately. The shadows melted into one confused blur. Jack lifted himself upward to his knees, and then, as a weight lifter might heave, gained his feet. Striving to throw off his assailants, he hove backward and forward, shouting, cursing, and swinging them around.

They clung to him like bear hounds. He shifted them, tried to strike, and they trampled over me as I lay. They tripped and fell as a single swirling mass came in contact with the edge of the tent, ripped through its frail canvas side while it rocked and tottered from ridge pole to peg, rolled outward, still struggling, and then the disturbed canvas fell cutting off my sight.

I rolled toward it, bruised by their feet and weight, intent on passing through after them and doing all that lay in my power to assist my enraged and desperate partner. The fallen folds of canvas impeded me. They would not give way. I heard a shrill voice exclaim in the native tongue, "He will have it! I'll make him quiet!" And then there was the sound of dull impact of delivered blow and for an instant all was still. Sled dogs aroused from their snowy nests barked and growled, surging forward as if to a fray and a kill with the instinct of the wolf uppermost. There could be no mistaking the voice that sharply drove them back. It was the shaman's; the voice that had languidly replied to mine so many times, but now pitched in a different and troublous key, and speaking his own language.

"Bind his hands and feet. He will soon be all right," he said. "Come! Take down the tent. Pack the sleds. We have far to go!"

An instant later I was seized by shoulders and feet, thrust into a sleeping bag, lifted, and deposited on the snow. Jack lay quiet and inert and they straightway thrust him also into his sleeping bag, one of the men commenting that if we had only retired

in them that night instead of lying on top of them covered by blankets, we should have saved them considerable trouble.

In but a few minutes the tent was down, everything—including Jack and me—packed aboard the two sleds, the dogs harnessed in, and we swung back over what I surmised was the homeward trail; but now we no longer lagged. Our previous day's travel had been orderly, leisurely, with no attempt at haste; but now men and dogs urged forward as if speed were a consideration. The shaman ran behind my sled clinging to the handlebars, panting but running lightly for one who pretended that he was all fat and too old for the trails.

Most of the time he ran voicelessly, save when now and then he cried to the runner ahead to speed up. This continued for nearly an hour, when I heard the native behind Jack's sled shout that the latter had regained consciousness and was trying to lift himself to a sitting posture. The shaman called a halt and went back to where Jack was struggling. The dogs, glad for a breathing spell, threw themselves on the snow, panting. I could hear the shaman's voice very distinctly.

"You be good! If not keep quiet, mus' tie you down. No like do that. You be good, no get hurt. You be not good, get hurt heap more."

"You old scoundrel! Where's my partner?" Jack demanded.

"He in other sled. Very nice. No hurt."

"Well, if you'll prove that to me I'll keep quiet. Let me talk to him," Jack insisted.

"Good!" said the shaman, and I heard him returning to my sled. He bent over and removed the bandages that rendered me mute. "Mos' forgetum," he apologized. "Very sorry. Now can talk."

My jaws were uncomfortably stiff from the long restraint, but I shouted lustily. "Are you all right, Jack? Are you badly hurt?"

"No," he replied; "but that old Judas hit me a jolt that was a knock-out and I'm as sore as a boil. Are you unhurt?"

"Except for a bruise or two where you all trampled my ribs when you put up your fight. They already had me fast. I tried to help, but it was no good."

"Nope. No good!" the shaman interjected with a chuckle.

Knowing more of the shaman's remorselessness where human life was concerned than did Jack, I thought it wise to advise the latter.

"See here," I called to him. "We're in no shape to put up a fight. I think it best to submit. Even if we were free, we've got no firearms."

"Yes, me catchum very nice peestol some sleeps ago," I heard the shaman chuckle, and now I understood his cunning in possessing himself of the only small weapon we had, and of which he stood in fear. The grinning old devil must have had our subjugation in view when he made that liberal trade. His chuckle suddenly stopped and his oily voice had a new quality when he said sharply, "You white mans—lissen! You be good, no hurt. But you be bad, and me kill you both, sure! No like killum you two mans, but mus' killum if no other way, unerstan', ummh? Now what say?"

I did not give Jack a chance to refuse or anger the shaman by impotent curses. I knew the latter too well to take such risks. Moreover I knew that it would pay better to take matters philosophically and do our utmost to conciliate our captor.

"Jack," I called, "I'm sure Peluk talks with a straight tongue, and that he doesn't want to hurt either of us if he can avoid it. He and I are pretty good friends, I hope, or at least were until to-night."

"Very good friends! Very good!" the shaman asserted standing midway between the two sleds, and I could not be certain whether he spoke candidly or sarcastically. "Me like Hathaway good. No like have killum. So, we go now, all very nice, ummh? Me sorry white mans no can walk. If get cold, me findum more blankets. Bimeby grub."

"All right, old sport. Go to it!" Jack called, and with a grunt of approval the shaman turned to his men and told them to get under way again, and we were off.

CHAPTER X.

Daylight came and, lying there in the sled, not at all uncomfortable save for my bonds, I watched for familiar landmarks. For a time I saw shapes of mountains that I remembered, and then these lost semblance of familiarity and I wondered if we were still going backward over our own trail. At last we halted, a quick camp fire was made, and after but a few minutes the shaman

came to my sled, put those gorillalike arms of his under me, and lifted me to a sitting posture.

"You give word not fight, friend," he said, grinning, "and I make arms loose, ummh?"

I grinned back at him as if it were all a joke and gave my promise. He immediately took off all my lashings save those round my knees and feet and called to one of his men, who brought me a steaming cup of tea and a huge slab of smoked salmon that had been skin-grilled and was hot from the fire. I started to eat with prodigious relish, and then thought of poor Jack. I interceded for him with the shaman who was reluctant to extend favors to one who had put up such a fight and was endowed with such great strength.

"He'll promise and will keep his word," I insisted. "Peluk, I give you my word this is so. You'll take mine, won't you?"

"Me not know other mans so well as know you," the shaman hesitated, and then finally said, "You askum give you word be good."

"Of course I promise! Anything to get these cursed thongs off my hands and elbows! I'm cramped stiff!" Jack called. "You've got the best of it, you damned old savage! I'd be a fool not to see that."

"Yes, that so," the shaman said; but he did not grin when he released Jack's upper bindings. In fact he scowled at him with sullen eyes. I made up my mind that if I ever got a chance to speak to Jack alone I would advise him to discretion, and warn him that our situation was far more dangerous and menacing than he deemed. I very much regretted that I had not confided in him all that I had learned, if not while in Malitka's house, at least after we had made our departure therefrom. I accused myself of having been an overly cautious fool and of having at the same time reposed overconfidence in the simplicity of the shaman.

It was quite evident that we had turned off our own trail somewhere, probably miles back, and were heading in a direction that could not return us to the village. We were bound for an unknown destination. Whatever Madame Malitka's intentions, for I was convinced that she was the author of our capture, she did not propose to have us again brought into her presence. And what was more, she quite certainly had never even thought of letting us escape. I wondered what we had done to incur her displeasure or fear after her first decision to save our lives and eventually to grant us liberty. But had she ever so intended? I gave it up; nor could I come to a conclusion as I brooded over the subject throughout that interminable, trying day.

As the forenoon advanced Peluk began to show signs of disappointment at our speed, although to me it was a very rapid progress. He finally stopped and walked slowly past the dogs of both teams, as they lay steaming and panting on the ground. He shook his head and then turned thoughtfully and stared at the sleds.

"We must go faster than we have been," he growled in his own tongue to his men. "We must lighten the sleds down to the bone."

He turned to me and spoke in English.

'Mus' get you out for li'l' time. No fight?"

"Of course not," I assented, and his men lifted me from my very comfortable bed in the body of the sled and laid me on the snow.

Immediately they seized our tent, stove, grub box and all hampers and carried them to the foot of a blasted tree. I took the opportunity to advise Jack to submit, adding a hint to the effect that I knew more about it than he did and would explain if we ever had an opportunity. And so, when it came his turn to be ousted, he accepted with good grace and even offered to assist if the shaman would but free him entirely. Peluk's face was wooden and he made no reply nor concession. Within a few minutes more Jack's sled was also emptied.

The three Indians conferred quietly beneath the dead tree and then I saw that they were going to travel light to the utmost; for they discarded even a portion of the food. They gave each dog a whole salmon, brought one of the choice smoked king salmon to both Jack and me, and devoured one themselves, eating with great hurried gulps and tearing the flesh away from the skin with fingers and teeth. They counted out enough more for but barely one or two additional meals for man and beast, made them into a bundle, took from the grub box the tea and sugar, and rolled the remainder of the food into a rubber ground sheet. With the sled lashings they tied this into a bundle and one of the natives, with the loose end of the rope in his teeth, climbed the dead tree until he came to a branch well

above the ground, after which he hoisted the bundle upward and lashed it into a crotch. It was evident that they were making a cache, for now they put all our belongings, save a few blankets and our sleeping bags, at the foot of the tree and spread over all the tent, weighting it down as best they could. I sat there striving to conjecture whether this could be to us a hopeful or inimical indication. One of the Indians, whose hunger was not satisfied, started to eat another of the edible salmon. He was harshly ordered to desist.

"Put that back!" Peluk growled at him. "Your belly may be lean before we reach other food. Fool! Can't you see that an accident of any kind might mean starvation? Put it back, I tell you!"

It wasn't a reassuring remark, and I was thankful that he was so engrossed in his projects that he did not chance to look at my face which might, at that moment, have betrayed my understanding of his tongue. I surmise that I must have looked crestfallen. He might have read that I feared starvation camps ahead on that unknown trail. And I have known famine, an experience that one never cares to repeat, that blanches the souls and bodies of those who have survived.

I was sitting staring at my feet when he returned to my side.

"Peluk," I said placidly, "maybe you'd be good enough to give my partner and me a smoke—a pipe; or even a cigarette would be——"

"Humph! Forgetum smoke!" he exclaimed. "One time, yes, mebbe ten time—you give me smoke."

His eyes twinkled in their folds of flesh that swept outward to his high cheek bones, and from his pocket he produced a packet of cigarette papers I had given him and some of my own tobacco. He even provided me with one of my own matches from a block of sulphurs he took from his own pocket. He did a like service for Jack but with a stolid, disinterested air. And then, his time of relaxation expired, he resumed action. We were lifted into the denuded and far less comfortable beds of the sleds, the harnesses of the dogs were disentangled and we swept out toward our unknown goal.

Urged on by the shaman, our speed was faster than I had ever believed it possible for dogs to maintain. With loads so light that they offered scarcely any resistance, they fell to the long wolf trot over level trails and into the long wolf lope down declivities. Their drivers took turns in lounging on the rails of the sleds, recovering breath, or in running ahead. The lean hips of the runner always worked rhythmically as with long forward fling of narrow snowshoe, arms bent to sides, and backward-thrown head he lunged forward.

At intervals the shaman himself took his turn in that headlong pace, his great shoulders swinging, the skirts of his blue denim parka fluttering about his sturdy legs, his head bared, exposing the cropped, grizzled hair. Then when panting he would signal for one of his followers to relieve him, leap to one side with that agility that had astonished me, take a few running strides as the sled came abreast, and throw himself over upon the birch rail that creaked and groaned beneath his weight.

Perched there, sidewise, with one moccasined foot patting the snow and always forcing the sled forward with his stroke, and the temporarily abandoned snowshoe thrown over my legs in the sled, he became a living thing of savagery, an animal of the chase, of speed, of determination. He had a goal in mind. He would spare nothing—not even his own body—to reach it. We did not pause until the dusk of the afternoon waned to the pallor of a night lightened solely by early stars and unbroken snows. For a long time high and rough mountains had been in sight which we constantly approached. We climbed over the low and gently rolling foothills to a place where the ascent must inevitably be more steep, and the shaman called another halt.

"Make fire," he brusquely commanded his men. "The dogs must rest," and then sat on the edge of my sled with his arms folded and stared upward at the dimming southern mountaintops whose peaks were still outlined against the horizon. He muttered to himself inaudible words, as if perplexed or dissatisfied. He then removed his long, narrow snowshoes and stuck them in the snow, toes upward.

"Legs tired?" he asked turning his inscrutable face toward me.

"Tired? They are dead!" I exclaimed. "Are you going to camp here?"

He ignored my question, regarded me for a moment more as if deciding something, and then leaned forward and grinned.

"Me sorry keep you so," he said gently.

"You call me friend. Other man call me savage. I unnerstan' that word. Me no like. But you say—friend. Ugh!"

He came closer, bending his bulky shoulders over and planting both huge mittened hands on the sled rail by my side and peering at me, as if to read my eyes.

"Me, Peluk, mus' do many things no like do; but—me, Peluk, shaman, and *tyune*—what you call chief—of my people, mus' do what think bes' for my people. Unnerstan'—ummh?"

"Yes, I understand," I replied, wondering what he had in his mind.

"Very good!" he said, still regarding me. "My young mans—t'ree, four, faive dozen—say mus' kill. No like killum you, who been my friend; but kill other man quick—all same caribou, moose, dog. No matter. But you—nope! Lady think you gone—never come back! But—but——"

He stopped while the horrible suggestion came to my mind that she had actually condemned us to death; bade us farewell with a quiet face knowing that we were doomed!

"Nope," he went on. "No can do. My papoose climb on your knee. You pat him, make very good friends, bring him li'l' look'-glass and call him 'my boy.' Very fine thing say, that, 'my boy!' Show you like li'l' feller. So, very big sad—me—Peluk. No can think what bes' do. Mus' do bes' can. Mebbe you help, ummh?"

He was actually appealing to me to advise him, to assist him from difficulties that to him were so pregnant, so overwhelming.

"Peluk," I said, laying one of my hands over his, "I don't know what you are up against. I can't even guess. But neither my friend nor I will do anything to hurt you if we can help it. We'll try to play your game if we can."

I must have spoken too rapidly for his comprehension, or used expressions beyond his knowledge of English, for he appeared puzzled. The only thing he understood was that my hand was laid over his in friendship and in pledge.

"Um-m-m-h!" he rumbled. "Me no catchum all speak, but—but—think if legs loose you no run away. Think if you say you no run away, me makum legs loose so you walk—ummh?"

"Yes," I declared, eagerly seizing the proffer of physical liberty. "If you make my feet and legs loose, I will come with you. No run. No fight. Go where you say. My friend the same. I speak for him. I give my word for both."

For answer he slipped from beneath his parka a long, keen blade and with one quick stroke carved through the tough rawhide that bound my knees. Another swift, skillful and strong flick and my tired feet could move at will. He put a hand beneath my armpit and lifted me to my feet. One of his runners saw me standing erect and rushed toward us whipping from a concealed sheath a hunting knife. Peluk threw up a hand and uttered an angry, imperative shout.

"Stop!" he commanded in his own tongue. "Stop! Am I the chief or not? Do you want to feel my knife in your heart? No? Then go back to the fire. Cook. Put the kettle in the edge. Tell Karslu to cut meat from the white man's stuff. I know what I do. You obey!"

As if terrified the man hastily replaced his knife and with exaggerated obedience did as he was bid. He threw fresh fagots onto the blaze and seized the remnant of bacon that had been confiscated from our stores.

Exulting in my freedom, but cramped and stiff, and moving stodgily, I walked across to Jack and bent over him.

"Leave it to me," I muttered rapidly. "It's our only chance. I've given my word that we will not try to run or fight; that we will go with them wherever they take us. When the time comes that we can talk alone I'll tell you a lot of things you don't know." And then I turned to the shaman and said, "I speak for my friend. Let him loose."

For quite an appreciable time Peluk hesitated, and then, almost unwillingly, crossed over and cut Jack's bonds.

"Thanks!" Jack growled as he moved his cramped limbs; but the shaman ignored him and turning to me said, "Me take your word. But if he try run away mus' shoot."

"Yes," I agreed, "if he tries to run you can shoot."

When, after the brief halt, we prepared to start, the shaman recklessly abandoned our sled and much of its contents and hitched our dogs in with his own team. He and each of his men strapped our and their rifles across their backs, and we tore along at a trying pace. The shaman's two runners seemed tireless, and the shaman himself displayed a marvelous endurance, but both Jack and I were compelled to cling to the sled handles and occasionally to throw ourselves on the sled rails for rest.

Off in the north a great tongue of flame leaped across the sky where the aurora borealis initiated its marvelously beautiful exhibition. Fold on fold of colors so mysterious and graduated as to be bewildering spread out and then began a slow shifting and swirling that could be likened to nothing so much as the graceful undulations of a fire dancer's skirts. It was so brilliant that for a time it lent a cold, ethereal beauty to the mountains through which we were traveling. We twisted this way and that so frequently that nothing but the immovable stars enabled us to retain any sense of direction. The heavenly fireworks died away, and left us in the starlit dimness of night. The moon arose and again all that frozen world was beautified and softened.

For more than two hours our dogs, poor tired beasts, had been lagging ever more slowly, but either because he was himself too weary to protest or because we had journeyed fast enough to relieve whatever suspense the shaman may have previously felt, he traveled silently. Only once was there even a momentary halt, and that was when the shaman and his fellows appeared to be in some slight doubt about the advisability of taking a right or left gulch that appeared to lead upward through the mountains. We adopted the one to the right that brought us to the crest of a divide, and one of the runners called back to the shaman exultantly, "This has proved the best. I had not forgotten. We are all right."

Trudging behind the sled I wondered what this meant, but I had not long to wait. We descended a long gully so steep that we were compelled to hold the sled to keep it from sliding down on the "wheel dogs'" heels, passed between two cliffs, dropped with a downward rush for another twenty yards, and reached the bottom. I stared about me as the dogs' harnesses were readjusted and then gave a gasp of knowledge.

We were on the trail to the gold camp and but a few miles from the last and final climb, the prodigiously steep, narrow gut between rocky walls that would bring the mines of the valley into view.

CHAPTER XI.

As I stood there turning my head this way and that and frowning at the recognized shapes a voice behind me said quietly, "Yes. You know. That's why I had to bring you back, ummh?"

I shifted around and met the shaman's steady eyes that seemed glitteringly malevolent in the light of the waning moon. I did not know what reply to make, and he took a step closer until his face was not far from mine and added, "One other white man see this place. That white man with scar on face. That man the one what we follow nine sleeps on trail and—kill! Unerstan' now why mus' bring you back?"

I was not only alarmed as a man may be when confronted with deadly peril, but also angry. His enormous duplicity and cold-blooded cunning were suddenly revealed to me.

"So you found out I had been up here, did you, Peluk?" I asked.

"Find out nex' day after you make shoot pine hens and wolf nearly catchum you. Sorry. Mebbe better wolves catchum that time. Save me heap trouble, because me like you. But no white mans ever see place where catchum gold and live. No can do. Sorry!"

"Then why in the devil didn't you kill us there in our camp instead of bringing us here?" I demanded, gathering hope from this point.

"That what my young men say. Me say no. Have very hard time keep young men from killum you; but think mebbe can keep live by bringum you here. No can tell. Mus' try. Me friend you. No like osser white man. Me very sad. Very sad man, me. No can see what mus' do!"

There was no doubting his sincerity.

I pulled off a mitten, saw that no one was watching us, and held out my hand to him. For a moment I thought he wasn't going to accept it.

"Thanks, Peluk!" I said. "And listen. No harm shall ever come to you through us if I can help it—no matter what happens."

"Very good you to say that," he muttered, and his hand met mine. "Very sorry no can do more. Do my best. Me very sad man."

"But anyhow, friend, we're still alive," I said. "That is something."

I should have liked to question him more but he checked me with a slight hiss of warning, and I discovered that one of his runners had finished his task and was watching us. I wasn't certain that he had seen us cross hands, but decided that inasmuch as my back had been turned to him, somewhat screening the shaman from view, he had

not. Fortunately that proved to be true, for we were treading close to the edge where the slightest thing might topple us over, the shaman perhaps, as well as Jack and myself. It flashed through my mind that I could best assist our sole friend by a pretense of enmity.

With my back to the watching native I winked and grinned at the stolid shaman, and then burst into loud expostulations, shaking my fists and stamping the ground. Peluk instantly replied with a storm of invective and threats and shook his fists at me. He did it so well that for an instant I was terrified by the fear that he had misunderstood my move and had accepted it as earnest. He put my momentary alarm to rest by shouting to the other natives, one of whom had unslung a rifle and was moving hurriedly in our direction.

"This white man wants to camp!" he cried. "Ugh! They have no guts for a long trail. They are weaklings without strong hearts like we have. But I will make him go on if he dies. If he does not, with my own hands I will kill him here. Keep back, you two. Leave him to me."

"I make pretend you no want to go any more," he muttered rapidly to me in English. "Wise old fox, you. See bes' makeum Injun think me and you not friends at all. That help me."

And all the time while he was explaining what I already knew, he kept up a most ferocious shaking of one fist, and with the other fumbled under his parka as if seeking his hunting knife. Jack was starting to close in but I shouted to him, "For God's sake, keep back! It's all right!"

Bewildered and nonplused, he hesitated for a moment and obeyed. It saved his life, for the native at the head of the dog team had suddenly shifted his rifle into his hands, ready and eager to fire.

I walked over and seized the sled handles indicating that I was willing to proceed.

"He will go now," cried the shaman in his own tongue. "His heart is water. He knows that I, your chief, am his master. The same as if he were my dog. Move!"

The great dog team, rested, stretched itself out, its leader straining wearily into the collar and bringing taut the sled rope like a rigid line extending between each pair of dogs. The sled started again, and we were once more on our way—but upon a trail that I knew. I wished that I could find some pretext to talk to Jack, but the situation was too dangerous to dare such risk. Once he called to me, "I say, Jim! Where's this thing going to end? I'm about all in. Can't you get the old sport to tell you?"

"Quiet, you!" roared the shaman with an anger that I feared was not entirely assumed.

"Yes, say nothing, Jack," I called, and the shaman volleyed native invective upon me in turn, whereupon I, too, fell to silence and the trail. It was morning when we began what I knew was the most difficult and final ascent, up which men and dogs, all panting alike and all straining, clutching, clawing, fought their way. Slipping, seizing handholds, struggling ever upward, we came to the great natural gateway through which so short a time before, to our eventual undoing, I had first beheld the secret gold camp. The smoke of the newly started fires crept lazily upward from the chimneys. Jack's exclamation of astonishment came roaring backward between the walls.

"We're coming to a village," he cried. "Looks a biggish place—away down below us."

The spent dogs, scenting smoke and rejoicing in the probability of rest, broke into a wild chorus of ululation and surged recklessly forward. The two runners got to their heads and thrust them back, restraining them. At a shout of warning from Peluk both Jack and I sprang to his assistance and, digging our heels into the snow, held the sled back with all our strength. Even then we tobogganed down a mere mountain shelf winding along the edge of a sheer precipice, to fall over which would have meant death hundreds of feet below. We swung around spurs of rock that, needle-like, reared themselves upward above the perilous trail, and had no time for anything but our task, seeing nothing of the beauties of that enormous mountain cup beneath. Our descent was rapid and, to me, confused.

Dogs of the village that we were approaching took up the cry, rushed to meet us, and came to us as we slipped out into the bottom of that terrifying declivity. Doors of cabins swung open and men emerged, followed by women and children. Undoubtedly they had been forewarned, were expectant, and, the most menacing feature of all, were silent, save for the mumbled mutterings of the squaws.

In an atmosphere of deadly hatred we passed between them to the first and near-by cabin. Once more I could observe an excellence of architecture, Russian in its form, indicating that this, too, was no mere native hovel. The camp might have been a section torn from Madame Malitka's orderly town, but dropped heedlessly, hit-or-miss, with no regularity, in this hole bordered by impregnable mountain peaks. I know of no similar place on earth; but had the Jungfrau, Monk, and Eiger of the Wengen Alps in Switzerland been completed in a solid round by the juxtaposition of similar mountain giants, and a village erected in their guarded hollow, a similarity might have been established. No other place could have been more isolated, more guarded from an outside world.

"Stop here," the shaman's voice announced in English, and then to his subjects he cried, in their own tongue, "Unharness the dogs and feed them well. We have traveled far. We have brought those for whom we went. Leave them to me. Go you about your work. I, your chief, can guard them, for from here they cannot escape. You know that."

He turned to Jack and me and beckoned us to follow him. We passed through the door of the Russianlike house, and when we had entered, he shut it behind us. An old woman stood to one side and glared at us as we passed. He did not speak to her but with a single gesture sent her away. She walked to a doorway and stopped.

"Bring food," he demanded. "We are tired. We would eat, and then sleep. All night we have traveled fast. Hasten!"

She disappeared, mumbling as she went, and the door closed leaving us three alone, while Peluk began stripping his parka upward over his head.

"Some place—what?" Jack remarked, staring at our surroundings.

And it was "some place." I have entered homes in Moscow and Nijni Novgorod that were no better. Its log walls were closely joined, well smoothed with deft adzmanship such as a ship's carpenter might use in constructing a well-made hull. It had a great fireplace of country rock, a solid and smooth timber floor and substantial furniture. Here, as in every house I had ever visited in Malitka's village, were valuable skins thrown upon the floor to serve as rugs, and pelts thrown across the backs and over the arms of heavily constructed chairs in lieu of other upholstery. Undoubtedly effort, knowledge, and care had been bestowed upon this dwelling.

Standing there in the center of the room beneath its well-hewn and darkened beams, I sensed a touch with one who had come from that great and distant outer world, of one who sought for his own comfort to reproduce and surround himself with makeshift ease. This might have been the hunting lodge of a king. Above the stone fireplace hung the most magnificent antlers of a moose that I have ever seen—wide-spreading, perfectly webbed, gracefully mushrooming into broad fans. Polished tusks, ungraven, hung beneath. The ultimate impression, in general, was one of bodily ease, means, and well-being.

Peluk shouted for the squaw and she came obediently inward.

"Bring dry moccasins for all three of us," he ordered, and she disappeared for but a moment to return with dry footgear. It was a great relief to pull them on over our tired feet. The shaman stood up, glanced at us, said, "Bimeby grub. Stay here," and trudged out of the room, closing the door behind him. I seized the opportunity to whisper rapidly to Jack.

"Whatever you do, don't ask any questions or talk in front of him about anything connected with this or Madame Malitka's camp. I can explain most of it when we are alone; but to talk now is dangerous! Mighty dangerous—as you will know when I find a chance to tell you everything. Take everything good-humoredly and try to make friends with the shaman. He is our sole hope!"

"He hit me an awful crack, just the same!" said Jack. "And I'd like to have as good a chance at him. I'd knock his head——"

The shaman opened the door and called to us.

"Come! Show place wash up."

We followed him across the hallway and into a room comfortably equipped as a sleeping chamber, and here again were evidences that it had been fitted by some one who esteemed his personal comfort. It had but one bed, but this was amply large for two and well equipped. On a washstand at the side stood an enameled hand basin, a copper kettle filled with steaming water, and two clean towels were thrown across a

rack. We lost no time in putting them to use.

That there was no intention of inflicting any unnecessary hardship upon us was further evidenced by the quality and plenitude of the meal to which we shortly after sat down with the shaman. This remarkable man acted as if he was neither tired nor perplexed, or as if there was anything at all peculiar in our situation. He even smiled and discussed anything except ourselves. He called attention to the fossil ivory of a long extinct mammoth and declared wistfully that if he could but get one such he would carve figures on it. I thought to myself that there was something of the artist, after all, in this heartless old barbarian!

"Like to carve big hunt; plenty dogs; plenty hunting mans and some sleds;" he ruminated. "Make picture of kill on big end so have heap room for trees, ummh? You think good?"

And then before I could answer, for he invariably ignored Jack and addressed himself to me, he suddenly lifted his head, dropped his knife and fork, and glared at the window. Glancing in that direction I saw that three or four squaws and children's faces were flattened against it, peering in upon us. The shaman was on his feet and at the door with a single bound. He wrenched open the outer door and poured forth a stream of invective in his own tongue, so rapidly, so harshly that despite the loud booming of his voice I could catch but a few words here and there. Through the window I had a glimpse of squaws and children scampering away like a flock of frightened partridges.

When he returned he was entirely unruffled, and resumed his sculptorial theme as if he had suffered no interruption. He was urbanity itself when, our meal and smoke finished, he suggested that perhaps if we slept for an hour or two we might feel rested.

"You going to sleep too, Peluk?" I asked.

A shade of anxiety flitted across his eyes as he answered, "Nope. Me no sleep. Mus' do—osser things. Mus' talk my people. Bes' you no go out until me say can go out. Unnerstan'? Bimeby mebbe can walk out. Me no can tell yet!"

"All right," I assented for both Jack and myself. "We'll not go out of this cabin until you say we can. Is that good enough, friend?"

A single gleam of his eyes, kindly but suggesting pity, responded to my use of the final word.

"Yes. That good. You unnerstan' that to go out no good. If me said, 'Go! Run fas'!'—that no good. In mebbe one minute, mebbe one hour, young men catchum, killum you! If you get away one, two, t'ree, four, mebbe ten whole days, ten whole sleeps—catchum you jus' same. Run away no good. No can do. Me do bes' can."

I watched him through the window after he had left us, and as he trudged away over the snow toward the other cabins I saw that he was directing his steps toward the largest cabin—no—house—in the village. Also I observed, with some growing disquietude, that other men, but neither squaws nor children, were proceeding in that direction as if to a meeting place.

"Well, Jack," I said, "I may as well tell you—and I wish I had taken a chance and told you long ago—that I've seen this place before. Do you remember that day I was chased by wolves?"

"Yes," he said, staring at me incredulously.

And then, reserving nothing, and explaining the reasons why I had not disturbed him by imparting what I had learned, I told him the whole story. He received it with better grace than I had anticipated. For some minutes after I had ceased talking he pondered.

"Then you think that all these natives are of a somewhat superior and clever class; that they know the value of gold; that they are aware that if white men knew of its existence, these, the natives, would succumb, go to pot—be wiped out. And—Malitka? What part do you think she has in all this?"

"I think," I declared deliberately, "that it is she who has brought these natives up to this standard; that for some private reason of her own she has no ambitions outside of those involved in this gold camp, no desire to leave it—and, what is more, doesn't intend to suffer any interruption. And—Jack—I'm more afraid of her than all the others! She has ordered the death of every one who purposely or accidentally intruded into this kingdom of hers. I don't know why we were spared in the first place. The shaman doesn't know, I am certain."

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "You don't mean to say you think it was Malitka who set the shaman after us, who condemned us

either to death or—whatever's coming to us?"

"I'm afraid that's about the only conclusion I can make," I replied. "I studied her pretty closely from my viewpoint, and I'm afraid that if she considered it necessary to wipe out merely two men, to guard what she considers to be the happiness and welfare of several hundreds of natives that she has brought into something like a state of civilization, it would be done. I don't say that I believe she would make such a decision callously, or mercilessly, but that—she'd see it through without flinching. She's got that quality which many historically known personages have possessed, and if she had by chance been an empress in a greater sphere, would have acted as she now acts toward us. Yes, I'm afraid that it was madame who sent the shaman out with us to destroy."

"But," he protested, "if she decided that we must die, that there was no other course, why didn't she have us made away with right there in the village?"

"Old man," I said, surmising something of what was in his mind, "one time a pet horse of mine broke its leg. I loved that horse. It trusted me. But I knew that it must die. I couldn't do the job myself. I hadn't the heart! I hired a man to do it, and asked him to wait fifteen minutes. In that fifteen minutes I ran out into the edge of a desert and sat down with my hands over my ears. I couldn't bear to hear the shot that must kill. I think—Madame Malitka liked you, but to hear the shot was too much."

He suddenly bent forward and groaned and rested one elbow on his knee, supporting his bent head with a hand tightly clutched across his brow.

I watched him, not as a doctor studies a tormented patient, but as one watches, pitying, a stricken friend whom he cannot succor. For a long time he sat thus, voiceless, and then dropped his hands and lifted hurt eyes to seek mine as if appealing for sympathy.

"Jim," he said, stopped, hesitated, repeated that nickname of long familiarity, and then flung out both hands toward me, palms upward, in a pathetic admission of helplessness. "Jim, I loved her!" And then, as if he had heaved aside barriers, he got to his feet and walked to and fro in that quaint, inexplicable room, with his head nearly touching the beams above, his hands now and then uplifted in fierce protest and despair, and poured forth his heart. "I couldn't see her for so long! While I was blind I got to listening to the music of her voice, to the soft, warm, smooth rippling of her garments when she moved; to the steady fall of her feet. Then, after so long waiting and eager craving, I first saw her. I lifted the bandages from my eyes when she wasn't looking.

"She was sitting there by the big fireplace. It was dusk, but the light shone on the side of her face—on her hair—on her hands. I hadn't thought she could be so beautiful! I forgot to put back the bandages until my eyes hurt with the leap of the firelight. I—I couldn't be the same after that! I haven't been! You told me many things, but—I haven't told you all this before—that I wanted her to love me. That I dared not tell her so, because I was afraid of her reply; that on the night before we left I begged her to let me communicate with her after we had gone on this mission of ours."

He stopped in front of the window for a time and did not look round when, in a dull voice, he resumed.

"I think she hesitated. I think she wanted to. And then, as if she had thrown up a wall between us, a thing to completely cut us off, she said, 'Impossible!' and hurried out of the big room. It seems incredible that she should——"

"I wish it were incredible," I interrupted, "but it is exactly the opposite. You haven't seen as I have how completely, how inflexibly she dominates not only the lives but the minds of those natives of hers. I believe she is their religion, a sort of Mohammed in female form! She may have expected the shaman to do the job at once, but the old chap hates to finish, and puts it off, because he struck up a friendship with me. All we can do is to hang on to that and trust to luck to find some way to finally escape—if we can survive until the snow is gone. There's one thing in our favor—I have learned their tongue until I can understand practically everything that is said."

Jack was still brooding over his disillusionment when the shaman returned.

The latter, as if his affairs also had gone awry, sat down in gloomy silence and stared at the fire. I wondered what had upset him, for I could not doubt that it had something

to do with us, and perhaps our final disposition.

CHAPTER XII.

All the following day we were left alone, the shaman appearing for but short intervals, and always with an air of restless preoccupation and grim annoyance. Once when he was out and I stood staring through the window I saw him in the center of a group of natives, his hands gesturing now and then as if he were vehemently addressing them, and once he shook his fist under one tall buck's nose as if threatening him. The man turned and walked away as if angry and disappeared into a cabin.

For a while some of the men at the mines worked, and I could see several windlasses going where stalwart squat forms labored like automatons, first laying broad shoulders and powerful arms to the hoisting of the great buckets filled with what I surmised was pay dirt, then skidding them out to the end of the dumps, emptying them, skidding them back to the shafts and lowering them for another burden of earth, gravel, and gold. Later, however, as if a general air of infectious restlessness pervaded the camp, these men stopped work and joined the idlers, who stood in knots or finally disappeared in some of the houses. There could be no mistaking a universal excitement nor doubt that it was due to our presence.

"Jack," I commented, "something is boiling here in this camp. I don't know what's up. Wish I did."

"If you're wishing for things, why don't you wish we had never come to Madame Malitka's camp?" he replied despondently.

"I might wish that, too, but for the fact that if we hadn't blundered into it we should have been dead before this, and as it is—well—we are still alive. We've had that much luck."

"I don't know whether we can call it luck or not," he declared moodily. "Somehow everything seems to have turned to bad luck. First I get snow blindness. Then we nearly die of starvation, find a place where we're not wanted, and you blunder—I'm not blaming you, old man!—into a secret of all these people so they don't dare let us go, and"—he stopped and walked across the room and threw himself into a chair by the fireplace from which place he muttered—"and I met her! I thought her so womanly; so fine!"

There came a loud bark and a snarl in the rear of the house, and then shrill expostulations. I stepped to the door, wondering at the noise, and was almost knocked down by the frantic lunge of my own pet dog, my own leader, who whined and whimpered in delight at finding me, and twisted his great body around my legs, finally turning and raising an angry ruff and growling with savagely bared fangs at the old woman who cared for the house. She drew back, uttering shrill and unheeded commands. Then suddenly the shaman appeared behind her and called to me, "Make quiet! Make dog still. Bring here."

I caught the animal by its sturdy neck, soothed it, and led it outward. I had never been to the rear of the house. It was now exposed. Behind it was a fence of saplings and two large outhouses. Peluk led me to one of these, and I saw therein several dogs of our own team and some of his.

He turned to the woman and gave an order, "Keep them well fed so they will be quiet. There are three missing. I will bring them also as soon as I can find them. And—be sure to feed them so well that they make no noise. Tell no one that they are being kept here. Is that plain?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then see that you obey," he commanded and, advancing toward me, indicated we were to return to the main room of the house.

Once we were inside and he had removed the huge, shapeless, vividly colored Mackinaw coat from his shoulders and stood in front of the fire, he made a little clucking noise with his tongue, as if audibly punctuating a mental exclamation. His great chest rose and fell as if in anger. The heavy muscles of his throat, exposed and bared by the opening of his collar, moved as he twisted his head from side to side, as if restless.

"Peluk," I asked, "what's up? Trouble?"

"Heap!" he replied regarding me.

"On our account?"

He nodded emphatically, started to speak, seemed to consider the advisability of confiding in us, and then said affably, "One young man here makeum trouble many time before you come. That very bad young man, what you call savage, ummh? Him say must killum you quick! Me say, 'No, not so much hurry.' Say can killum mebbe next week, mebbe nex' mont', jus' as good as killum now. Think mebbe young man talk

other young mans, makeum think his way, ummh? Me speak to one old man, say, 'One white man my friend. Osser white man no matter. Killum and be damned; but no like my friend be kill so quick.' So, when get ugly say, 'To-night big talk in big house. Say then what do.' Young mans go way. No like talk. Say all palaver, ummh? Unnerstan' palaver, ummh?"

"Yes," I said, "I understand that word. But—what happened then?"

"Nossings! Palaver to-night."

'Then—then—why did you collect our dogs and your own and fasten them up in the shed out back?" I asked.

He grinned, turned his back on me, poked the fire and squatted down beside it before answering, with a childlike blandness, "Me got very fine dogs, ummh? You got very good dogs, ummh? Think bes' keep good dogs where can see get plenty grub. If killum you, think mebbe keep your dogs."

It was a most cheerful explanation. The old rascal was keeping an eye open for future eventualities. We were of far less importance than the possession of so many first-class animals. It was useless trying to get anything more out of him. I repeatedly attempted and failed, as the afternoon wore away. He would talk of anything but subjects vital to us, craftily avoiding any reference to our extremity. It was not until we had eaten our supper and he donned his Mackinaw again that he even referred to it. Then in a tone of the utmost gravity he said, "Me go now. Big meeting. Make talk. But—lissen! You mans stay here! No go out—unnerstan'? No go out! Not even if hear noise. Stay here. Me come back, you bet! Me do—do my bes', unnerstan'?"

I jumped to the window and pulled the shade aside to watch him depart. In the light of stars and snow I could see him leisurely trudging along, ambling like a great bear toward the other end of the village where the lights from the big council house, or whatever it was, threw dim, yellow reflections into the night. Our situation was anything but reassuring.

"Hang it all! If he thinks so much of you, why doesn't he at least give us back our rifles and turn us loose so we can make a fight for it, if nothing more?" Jack cried.

"Because that would mean that some of his own people would get wiped out before we did," I retorted. "Any fool can see that! If you ask me, I believe the old ruffian, bad as he is, wishes to do the best he can for us. I don't think he wants us to precipitate a fight that, after all, could be nothing but hopeless and predecided."

Jack moved around the room like a caged animal two or three times before throwing himself into a chair and saying, "Well, I suppose you are right. But, anyhow, we shan't have long to wait. That's one consolation."

But his prediction proved slightly amiss. We did have a long wait; or, at least, it seemed long to men in our position and jeopardy. It was nearly ten o'clock, a late hour in those latitudes, when we heard, faintly through the thick walls, the crunching of feet on crisp snow. The hall door was jerked open, then closed impetuously, the strides advanced and our door opened to disclose the shaman. He shut it, then stood with his back against it and his eyes swept over us and finally fixed themselves on the floor at his feet. He removed neither Mackinaw nor fur cap, and his arms hung listlessly by his sides. He scowled as if not only angry, but thoughtful. His whole attitude was one of a man at bay and uncertain. And then, as if coming to some swift determination, he moved quickly from the door and advanced to where I was standing, facing me with his black eyes sparkling in the firelight.

"Go get trail parka, trail *mukluk*, make ready run fas'!" he said. "No can tell what come. But no run till me say 'go!' Mebbe not have to run. Lissen! Down in *kashime* many mans talk. Think mebbe do what me say but for one young man!" He characterized him with the worst invectives in his tongue. "This savage say mus' killum you, and if me no quiet, mus' killum me. But me makeum afraid! Then me come away. Some young mans stay there palaver. No can tell what they do. Hope do nossings. But if do—well—mus' do bes' can. Me! Still shaman, *tyune*. Mus' wait see. You do what me say, ummh? If young mans come no let see you, ummh?"

"Nothing else for us to do," I replied; and then, sensing that perhaps through his friendship for me he had jeopardized himself, I added, "But, Peluk, it's not fair to you. You've done all you could. You are my friend. That's so, isn't it?" He appeared to understand and to be grateful for my declaration, and nodded his head in emphatic assent. "Then why don't you give

us rifles and open the back door and let us go?" I demanded.

He lifted his hands and shoulders in a shrug.

"Go? Where go? Lissen! If you get away and go ten—yes, more as twenty sleeps —no good. Catchum you. Bang! Bang! Dead! No, mus' let me, Peluk, say what bes' do. Mus' wait! Mebbe young mans do nossings. Heap young mans talk big but do nossing. Mebbe cool off same as bad dog in water, ummh? Mebbe soon see. No wait long."

He turned and hastily moved out into the hallway where he muttered orders to the old squaw who was our housekeeper. I heard a door open, and, alert to learn what was afoot, stepped cautiously out into the hall. Jack followed me. A muffled yelping of dogs and the sharp commands quieting them reached our ears. We slipped farther along the hall until we could look through the rear door that had been left ajar. In the outhouse the shaman and the squaw were putting the harnesses on the animals, harnesses that had been unsnapped from the long sled rope that lay stretched out on the snow in front of the empty birch sled.

The moon was lifting itself clear and white above the high peaks making of each snowy incrustation a phantom shape of jewels, beautiful, motionless, chill. Save for the movement of dogs and the sharp mutterings of the shaman and his helper all was still. We stood and watched until, after all the animals had been harnessed, the shaman shut the door upon them, leaving them in the warmth of their outhouse kennel. He inspected the sled, and the rope, bending over like some grotesque shape in the moonlight. Once he struck a match to inspect a lashing of a stay that was loose, seemed to regard it as unimportant, and then moved toward us. Jack and I stole swiftly back to the living room and awaited him.

When he came he was apologetic, as if he had been a suave host detained from guests. He mumbled something about the necessity for food, and then, observing that we had not laid out garments suitable for the trail and the frigid night, said gently, "Think bes' get warm things. Mebbe go nowhere. Mebbe run fas'. If clock go so far"—and he stepped to the nickel-plated clock on the mantelpiece and indicated a round of the hour hand—"can sleep." He turned to me with his wide grin, and the wrinkles netted themselves at the corners of his eyes as he added, "Hope so!"

It would have been difficult to conceive after a glance at his smiling, half-humorous, half-thoughtful face, that any of us were in stress and this a portentous hour. As if all his doubts were dissipated after he had once made a decision, he calmly walked to the crude mantelpiece, found thereon tobacco and papers and with a hand that did not in the least falter made himself a cigarette, lighted it with a pine spill from the fireplace and blew a cloud of smoke upward before he said, "Jus' same thing mebbe bes' you get parka, trail boot, cap, ummh?"

He had not for a moment forgotten details. He was insistent upon obedience to his orders. We brought them into the room and after changing the moose-hide moccasins for hair-seal *mukluks* we looked to him for further instructions.

He did not seem to notice us. His eyes were fixed on the slow movements of the hands of the clock, as if he were measuring time itself. Two or three times he crossed to the window, cautiously pulled the denim shade aside and peered outward. Each time he dropped the folds and returned to glance at the clock and then to succumb to abstraction. A full hour passed. He took another peep through an aperture of the curtains, returned, and with a sigh of relief said, "Well, think all go good. Think can sleep. But—to-morrow think mus' make sure young man what speak of not talk too much. Mus' get that young man a klootch. Nothin' like good squaw make young mans quiet, ummh? You think same? Squaw and babee make mans go quiet. Ummh? Makeum heap think."

He relaxed, dropped into a chair with his feet sprawled in front of him to toast their soles in the heat of the fire, and with his hands clasped over his lap, began to philosophize. And then with his acute, half-savage sense of hearing, he suddenly stopped, lifted his head and listened intently. His nostrils dilated, his heavy black eyebrows settled into a frown and his parted lips closed. He jumped to his feet and blew out the lamp.

"Somebody come," he whispered. "Bes' you keep very still. Lissen!"

And in the ensuing silence we could hear the trampling of feet on snow, becoming ever more audible, the muttering of voices, a cough, and a sharp exclamation. A sense

of danger invaded the room. In the dim blaze from the fire we saw the shaman move to the door. He opened it cautiously and stepped into the darkness of the hallway. Then, sharply, there came a harsh, imperative rap on the front door. We heard the shaman open it, and Jack and I stepped to the window and peered out.

The moon, now at the full, had arisen so that in its clear light we could observe everything distinctly, the faces of men, even the expressions of those nearest us. A score of them were standing there, with one tall native some paces in front, as if he had been duly chosen as their spokesman. In the stillness every word that passed was wafted back through the open doors, fittingly accompanied by the chill air, and so distinctly spoken that even I, alien to that tongue, could understand. The shaman had advanced to meet them, for after rapping upon the door they had fallen back several yards. He stood where the moonlight shone upon his face, upon his broad shoulders, and with his hands tucked in their habitually careless attitude under the folds of his flannel shirt.

"Well," he asked silkily and, smiling, "what have you come to say?"

The group behind the spokesman shifted uneasily, but the latter had no hesitancy and spoke belligerently.

"We have come to get the two white men."

"You have, ummh?" said the shaman, as unperturbed as if the errand were a casual one of good will. "And what do you propose to do with them?"

"They must be killed," the tall native asserted. And then as if to bolster up his followers' courage, he fell into loud declamation, bending his head forward to scowl at Peluk and gesturing with his hands. "Hark you, Peluk! Always before now, when strangers came and the Great Lady sent you out upon their trails to slay lest the secret that has made our people richer and happier than any other people in this land be loosened, you obeyed. You slew. You told us then that it was her will that none might ever come and go away to carry the tale. She told you to follow these and slay! But you did not. Your heart has turned to water, because one of these white men you made a friend and because you are old. Peluk, you are no longer fit to be chief. Shaman, yes—to sit by your fireside and tell legends; but to rule and carry out the Great Lady's orders never more. From to-night I am chief of our people. We have so decided in council."

He stopped as if to give the shaman a chance to resign himself to their will; but Peluk stood there in that careless attitude and the moon shining on his swarthy face was reflected from his white teeth as if his grin had merely broadened. He took his own time to answer, and I observed that the men in the group behind their new leader moved restlessly as if the suspense was telling upon them. When the shaman spoke it was in that same placid voice, save that in it was contempt.

"Bah! Big words! So you are named *tyune*, are you, Tzitka? By all the people, ummh? You mean by yourself and the few men here in the gold camp, without giving the hundreds in the village of the Great Lady, or even herself, a chance to speak. You are chief? Fool! Go back home. Be glad that you are still head man in the mines. You have no other wisdom. Yours is not the brain to understand or to lead anything more than a few miners and a team of dogs! You shall not have the white men!"

The tall man seemed to sense the doubts of his followers, who were whispering and muttering together, and he put his new authority to the test. He was palpably angry and excited. He shook his fist at the shaman and shouted, "I say we shall. If you try to object we shall move you out of the way, even if it is necessary to kill you. I, who am now *tyune*, say so. Are you going to submit or not?"

His followers seemed to gather a trifle more courage and all became motionless once more, watching the shaman, who still stood there, smiling, motionless, squarely planted on his feet.

"And I ask you, Tzitka, who are no more chief than one of my dogs, if you are going to obey my orders and go back to your cabin? Take heed how you answer. One should keep cool on such a nice night, such a beautiful night, so moonlit as is this."

His deep voice was as musical, unconcerned, indolent as if he were merely there to discuss the weather.

"We have talked enough! Out of the way!" shouted Tzitka, starting toward him.

With an almost incredible rapidity the shaman's right hand leaped from cover, the moon glinted on the blue steel of the pistol he had adroitly gained from me, and with the

flip of his wrist showing that all his pretended ignorance of the use of the firearm had been for my illusionment, he fired. Fired as only an expert gunman can! Tzitka, charging, falling dead in mid-air, was by his own impetus carried forward so far that the shaman had to step aside as the body of his would-be assailant lunged headlong, face downward, to the snow. The dogs of the camp, alarmed, set up a turmoil of howls and barks, that came faintly to our ears.

Tzitka's followers jumped back in confusion, shocked as was I by the swiftness and unexpectedness of the tragedy. The shaman stood almost as quietly and indolently as he had before inflicting death, with his left hand still comfortably thrust under his belt and the other holding the pistol. He was still smiling, but now he shook his head slowly, as if amused by the action of a child. There was something appalling in his very immobility and disregard of the dead man at his feet. There was something terrifying in the very quality of his voice, still calm and musical, when he inquired, "Have you any more chiefs among you—'duly chosen,' I think was said—who wish to take my place? If so, I hope his modesty in his new honors will not prevent him stepping forward. No? No one to take Tzitka's place? What a pity! And on such a nice night, too, with the moon so bright, ummh? When one can see so plainly!"

It is impossible for me to convey the sneer of contempt that was in that silky voice of his; but now, of a sudden, after a moment's awed wait in which he derived no answer, it changed, as did his attitude. His other hand swept upward, clenched, his broad shoulders hunched themselves, his massive head thrust itself forward and his eyes seemed to flare and catch sparkling glints of light from the white moon. Without apparent effort or preparatory gathering of leg muscles he leaped forward to confront the rebellious natives. One of them started to run, and he shouted angrily:

"Stop! One step more and you shall join Tzitka, that vain, brawling dog who wished to be chief!"

The man who had started flight hastened to obey, lifting his hands upward in quick gesture of submission, and it is my candid conviction that he was not a fraction of a second too soon; for already the shaman's hand was lifting itself skyward for that deadly, dexterous, downward flick that would have meant death.

"So you elected Tzitka chief, did you?" he roared. "You"—and one after another he snarled out their names, as if to emphasize his brand upon them individually and mark them for his displeasure—"you let the ambitious vaporings of this foolish Tzitka cloud your heads and dazzle you as the sun upon glittering snow! I am *tyune,* shaman. I, Peluk! None other! Pick up that carrion and take it with you. Get back to your homes while you may yet walk. To-morrow I will decide what your punishment shall be! Whether it suits me best to have you alive, or send you to join this wonderful chieftain of yours that may have gone to a hunting ground where he has no followers until you come. It would be a pity to have so great a *tyune* arrive there with none to do him honor and explain his greatness. Pick him up and be gone, I say!"

The dogs of the camp had intensified their chorus to a wild crescendo. Lights were appearing in the windows of the cabins. Men and women were starting in our direction; but so fierce and so far-reaching was that great bellow of Peluk's that it carried above all other sounds; even some of those who had been disturbed by the gun's report must have heard, for glancing that way I saw the foremost hesitate and stand still, shadowy movements disclosing their agitation and fear.

Terrified by his deadliness and his consummate air of command, some of the men of the insurgent group rushed forward and picked the body of Tzitka from the snow. A dark blotch was exposed where it had rested. From where Jack and I stood, tense and breathless, we could see how certain had been the marksmanship of the man who had pretended that he could not use a pistol, for the exact center of Tzitka's forehead bore death's seal.

"To his cabin with Tzitka's body!" the shaman cried. "To your own cabins for yourselves, and there to stay until to-morrow! Heed! Until to-morrow! For to-night I, Peluk, shall walk, and woe shall come to the house of him whom I meet!"

The bearers of the corpse became a tiny, slowly moving group in the center of those who had accompanied Tzitka upon his rash venture. As if the shaman's far-reaching threat had terrified them, the perturbed inhabitants of the village no longer advanced,

but shifted irresolute, appearing in the distance like black shadows restlessly moving over a field of glittering white. The one compact shadow was that in the midst of which was carried the dead Tzitka. It diminished, joined the others; there was a momentary halt, and then disintegration as if scattered by some invisible terror. Individual shadows were absorbed and lost in the darker shadows of houses and cabins. Every human form disappeared. Nothing suggesting life was left save the flitting shapes of wolf dogs, disturbed, scenting blood and reverting to type. Disappointed, they lifted their heads and bayed the brilliance of the arctic stars and moon before returning to their beds. Everything was again still—still as if forever locked and frozen by the chill gods of the utter North.

Probably but a few minutes intervened between the boisterous moment of death and the culminating silence; but to me they measured as a prolonged lapse of years. I blinked my eyes to convince myself that I had witnessed realities, stared at the white mountain peaks, at the cabins, and thence backward to the spot of tragedy where my gaze was arrested by a solitary figure. It was Peluk, the shaman, motionless, massive, standing there in the moonlight with both hands thrust under his belt beneath the overflowing folds of his shirt. His face was turned toward the village as if in steadfast inspection to assure himself that his commands had been respected and obeyed. His feet were spread astride a dark spot on the snow.

CHAPTER XIII.

Throughout all that swiftly passing time in which our lives had been in jeopardy neither Jack nor I had spoken a word. But now he murmured excitedly, "By God! He's got away with it! He's master of 'em all! The way he killed that chap was as cold-blooded as anything I've ever seen. What were they saying when it happened? What's he told 'em to do now? What's up with us?"

I dropped the curtain and faced him. I began to speak rapidly, explaining what I had overheard when the banging of the front door cautioned me to stop. The sound of a few rapid strides of moccasined feet intervened, and the shaman stood in the doorway—smiling! Actually smiling!

"Finish that, mebbe," he said. "Nice here, ummh? Warm. But—sorry!—think bes' go quick. Think bes' get ready take trail. Quick!"

He dropped all his indolence and leaped across the room to where his parka was thrown across the back of a chair, jerked it over his body, and clapped his fur cap on his head. "Come!" he ordered, and we gathered our own outer garments and, donning them, followed him. He shouted something to the old woman that I did not catch; but she ran after him and we came together outside where he had opened the door of the outhouse he had used as a kennel and had begun pulling harnessed dogs from the darkness, dragging them to their places alongside the sled rope and snapping them to the rings fastened thereon.

He shouted an order to the old woman to go inside and bring the rifles which he had evidently left in her care. She returned laden with cartridge belts, rifles, and a robe or two. One of the dogs lifted its muzzle and wailed. Peluk silenced it with a savage kick, spoke soothingly to the others and commanded Jack and me to "make hard hold on sled. Mus' run quick."

He stood at the leader's head restraining it with a hand on its collar and in his native tongue gave the old squaw her final instructions.

"If any one comes to-night you say we are asleep and not to be awakened. If no one comes until to-morrow, you say you know not when we left. Say that over for me!"

Obediently she repeated his words.

"Good," he said and, releasing the lead dog, sprang to action, and with long, agile strides ran ahead of the team on the outward trail. The sled leaped so impetuously that both Jack and I were compelled to spring quickly to gain a handhold on it. We were jerked forward as empty, light, almost weightless, it responded to the surge and pull of the leaping animals.

I saw as we approached the eastern side of the tiny valley that we were beginning to ascend and were following an old trail. Then we began to climb stiffly up the narrow shelf that could lead to but one pass—that through which we had first entered. The village lay below us, with some of its lights still burning, and I esteemed it fortunate that the camp dogs had not yet settled to rest, but were still howling and yapping; for if silence had prevailed they would have heard our departure and aroused the village

with their alarm. We climbed so steadily and at such speed that I, for one, was glad to rest when we reached the narrow gates through which we must pass. Despite the fact that in all that long and strenuous upward journey he had led the way, and had therefore nothing to cling to that might assist him forward, Peluk was far less winded than either Jack or I.

"Wait," he ordered and went back down the side of the mountain for some distance, where I saw that he assumed an attitude of intent listening as if to learn whether any sounds from below might indicate an alarm. Apparently satisfied he returned to us and said, almost genially, "Very nice. Think mebbe not find out till morning we gone."

We slid and scrambled down that woeful declivity, landing in a confused bunch of snarling dogs at the bottom, and the shaman straightened the team out and prepared to start. Then as if thinking of something essential, he came back to the sled and unlashed the three rifles that lay in the bottom. He inspected each in turn, made certain that the chambers were full, and, much to my surprise, handed one each to Jack and me, together with cartridge belts that he advised us to buckle on.

"No can tell if chase; but if do—by damn, when me say shootum, you shootum to kill! Unnerstan'? You my friend, see?" he said addressing me. "Me do bes' can for you. No more can do. Me give gun, now, but if me say giveum gun back, no can do more for you, and you giveum back, ummh?"

We instantly caught his meaning, which was that if worst came to worst in the final end, and he himself were overborne, we must for his sake submit. I had found it possible on our way up the long slope to explain to Jack that in the mining camp the shaman's authority as chief had been disputed and rejected. Evidently Peluk feared that if we ever reached the main village it might occur again, leaving him bereft of authority and impotent.

When we resumed our flight I fell to speculating on all that I had heard, and the outlook was not reassuring. I had not told Jack, through lack of opportunity, that I had distinctly understood that it was Madame Malitka who had ordered the shaman to destroy all those others who had encroached upon her domain—and who had probably commanded our destruction as well. The inhumanity and deceit of that extraordinary woman seemed nothing less than monstrous, when I recalled how she had bidden us farewell and sent us forth to death. The callous indifference toward human life displayed by the shaman seemed honorable by comparison. He had at least the condonement of being nothing more than a savage by breeding and instinct, and a hunter and slayer of living things; but he had not thus far actually betrayed us. True he had exercised a cunning entirely his own in accompanying us as guide and then overpowering us, but had later defended us with merciless loyalty at the risk of his own life. Furthermore, he had not deigned to mention to us the fact that he had that night killed a man in our defense.

This thought led me to another question, which was whether he had slain Tzitka in our behalf or merely to preserve his own authority; whether he might not have surrendered us for execution, after all, had that delegation refrained from supplanting him as chief of the tribe. I could not comprehend his motives nor come to a decision. I had seen him smile with an almost childlike candor when showing me a carved button; smile when he lied to me about his knowledge of firearms; smile to me when telling how for nine days he had trailed over winter snows to kill a white man and native traitors who had accompanied him in that last flight; smile with the same bland visage while standing almost astride the still quivering body of Tzitka, whom he had slain.

And now he had voluntarily handed us rifles and ammunition with the request that if he recalled them we were to surrender without protest, and had called me "friend!"

His actions were too contradictory for me to follow. He had captured us ruthlessly and then preserved our lives. He had lied to rob me of a pistol and then equipped us with firearms.

I had been running like an automaton, clinging to the side bar of the sled that carried no burden other than a single, small bundle lashed amidships. Lifting my eyes to scan our surroundings, everything for a moment seemed unreal, impossible. Yet the moon shone steadfast and serene, illuminating everything, the distant patches of forest, the high glittering mountain peaks, the white expanse of snow over which we fled. A weird picture it must have been to any who could have watched our flight. Yards ahead and with arms bent to his sides ran

the huge but tirelessly nimble shape of the shaman; behind him strung out for more yards the steadily leaping forms of great dogs, silver-gray with frost upon fur where they had perpetually galloped through the vapors of their own breaths; and, last of all, came the bounding, careening sled, to which clung two other running shapes, my partner and I. From the lips of men and the panting mouths of dogs came regularly an almost impalpable tiny, ephemeral cloud of steam that speedily froze and fell in snow dust. It did not seem possible that we were fleeing for life—or at least respite—or that we ran from menace behind to meet other and perhaps more inexorable dangers ahead.

I half expected that the shaman would leave the gold trail when he came to the place where we had entered it on our inward journey; but he did not. Instead we passed it and its scars, flashing by in haste. We ran for perhaps two miles more before he suddenly shouted to the dogs, threw up a hand to us, halted, and came lunging back to speak to us. He was breathing heavily when he stopped and, as usual, ignoring Jack, addressed himself to me.

"Think bes' you keep dogs quiet, ummh? No noise, unnerstan'? Mus' go back small way and lissen, ummh? We come fas' but—mebbe others come more fas'. Mus' make sure, ummh? Wait you, here. Me come back bimeby."

He slid backward along the moonlit trail, rounded a bend of intervening cliffs, and was lost to sight.

"That old devil is as tireless as a locomotive!" Jack muttered, and threw himself into the sled to rest. "If he's taking us back to Malitka, I think we've got a chance. What did you make out of all that row back there—that you haven't told me?"

I hastened to fill in with hurried sentences all that I had not imparted, reserving until the very last what Tzitka had indicated of Malitka's guilt. I voiced that part carefully, slowly, punctiliously precise in repetition of Tzitka's words. Jack sat up in the body of the sled where he had stretched himself, leaned both elbows on the side rails, and then climbed out.

"Old man," he said, "I can't believe it! You've not understood everything, or——"

"I understood every word they spoke."

"Then," he said, after a pause, "why is he taking us back to her village?"

"Taking us back to the village doesn't mean that he's taking us back to her," I retorted. "Maybe he's taking us through the village. Going on beyond. That this is the best and only way out. Anyhow——"

I had no time to say more, for the shaman came tearing down upon us, running as if for life, bawling orders as he came. He did not pause as he came abreast us, but hurried up to the dog team and stirred the animals to action.

"Run! Mus' run!" he shouted back. "Men in camp know we gone. Come fas' with dogs. Hearum plain! Injun run more fas' as white man. Bimeby catch us. Run!"

And then, as never before, we ran!

It was a long time before I caught any sound other than that produced by our own flight. And then I heard the faint bay of a wolf dog. I pictured a man clinging to a thong of harness, taking great, sweeping strides as the loping animal tugged and assisted him forward.

Peluk's acute ears must have noted that warning, for now he shouted to me, "Come quick. Take lead. Mus' drop back."

I ran forward, slowly gaining over the dog team until I was by his side.

"You know trail. Follow it," he shouted. "I go back to holdum. You keep on till bimeby me catchum you. If no catchum you, run! Go Lady's house. Mebbe she help, mebbe no help. You no stop, but run! Always run!"

He jumped to one side and speedily I was left alone, running as he had instructed, with the lead dog's nose close at my heels.

For some minutes I heard nothing more disturbing than the sounds of our own flight. After a while I shouted over my shoulder to Jack to relieve me of the pacemaking, and he surged forward while I fell behind until the sled came abreast and then lurched over on its side bar and caught my breath. I had barely gained it when from behind I heard the sharp explosion of a rifle shot, followed instantly by two others, then by the faint, wailing scream of a man's voice in agony and the wild yelping of a dog in pain. A moment later I heard five shots in rapid succession, as if some one had fired a volley at random. They sounded as if fired from the same rifle. Jack, too, heard them, and suddenly halted the dog team and came running back to me.

"The shaman's a damned old murderer," he panted. "But—he's fighting for us, after

all—back there on his own—and I don't like it! You go on with the dogs and see if you can't get Malitka to send us help. I'm going back to join Peluk!"

"Go yourself," I retorted. "If any one can get Malitka to help, it's you—not me! And, what's more, I doubt if she'd do anything for either of us, but she might for the shaman. He's her right hand."

"Nonsense! Don't be a fool!" he cried, reaching for the rifle that he had laid in the sled when taking his turn in leading the dogs. But mine was already in my hand and I was running from him, shouting that whatever happened one of us must keep the dogs from escaping, as they might prove our last salvation.

When last I saw him he was evidently trying to anchor the sled so that it could not be pulled away by the animals, and was having much difficulty in his task. I ran forward and, as I did so, heard four or five more shots, each sounding nearer, and warning me that I was approaching the point of conflict. Suddenly the unmistakable humming of a bullet sped past my ear, followed immediately by a report, and I threw myself to one side on my belly, bringing my rifle to bear on the trail which was open for perhaps a hundred and fifty yards ahead.

Almost instantly I heard a voice not far distant, that of the shaman, in its usual pleasant drawl, "Ugh! So my friend come back to help me, ummh?"

"Of course, Peluk," I called back, still keeping my eyes fixed on the white moonlit strip. "Did you think I'd leave you here alone to fight for us?"

"Ummh! Much bes' you run fas' what I told you do; but—me unnerstan'. Friends, we—sure!" He paused a minute and then added carelessly, "Think mebbe me shootum two mans. Sure one. Mebbe when see you come help me they got 'fraid and——"

A swift spurt of flame from behind a tree exposed to me his position and from up in front came a scream that could have been nothing other than a death wail. His eyes, keener than mine, had discovered movement, a target, and he had fired. A volley of aimless shots ripped and scarred the tree trunks about us, a dog off in the distance howled as if impatient to be unleashed, and there was a moment's silence. Then the same calm, placid voice went on, as if there had been no interruption at all.

"And they think mebbe bes' not come too close, ummh? Me think mebbe they try come behind. So bes' we run fas', then stop again, ummh?"

It was my turn to interrupt. A dark figure had lifted itself to its feet and started to bound across the trail as if seeking to join companions on the opposite side. When I fired it seemed to be caught in mid-air, bounded convulsively upward and fell in a black heap. The echoes had not died away when the shaman was on his feet and dodging rapidly between the trees and shadows shouting, "That good! Come on!" But to my astonishment he was running toward our enemies instead of from them. Furthermore he bellowed a loud, defiant war cry as he charged, a lone man intent upon coming to close quarters with many men.

I am neither a coward nor a brave man; but for an instant his uncompromising valor jarred me! My own judgment bade me lie still. I don't know what obsessed me in that instant, unless it was a weird and foolish intoxication of fray, but I found myself running as he ran, dodging trees, keeping in shadows, charging forward and shouting like a madman.

Evidently our attack was so unexpected, so fiercely pushed, so recklessly pursued, that our enemies were bewildered. Six or eight targets suddenly presented themselves there in the moonlight. I dropped to my knee and began firing, long practice with the rifle directing my aim. As if the same targets had presented themselves to the shaman, he too was firing. I don't know which one of us proved the most efficient. I do know that at least three dark shapes lay in the open trail, one of which writhed and rolled in an agony of wounds. I had leaped forward again, and again dropped to my knee to get steady aim at another leaping shadow, when my rifle was seized and twisted upward and the shaman stood over me.

"Me think that enough," he observed in about the same tone of voice that he might have used if discussing the completion of a carved button. "Think mebbe bes' we run fas' now and find sled. Takeum some time help other Injuns who got what you callum —hit, ummh? By time they get brave again, we gone. Long way down trail, ummh? Come!"

His placidity had its effect upon me. My fighting ardor cooled. When his hand had caught me by an arm and bodily lifted me to my feet as if I were of no weight, he

started and ran, still avoiding the open trail, dodging trees, and keeping in shadows, and I ran after him. We encountered a running figure in the open trail and heard Jack's challenge.

"Had a devil of a time fastening up that pack of dogs," he panted. "Was afraid I'd be too late. Hello, Peluk! You're a game old sport! But—for God's sake, man!—you're hit!"

We sprang together to catch the shaman as he sagged to his knees. We jerked his Mackinaw open, ripped his prized blue flannel shirt down the front and found his undershirt soaked with blood from a nasty wound in the shoulder. By the time we had cleansed it with handfuls of snow he revived and sat up.

"Peluk," I demanded, "when did you get that?"

"That first shot fired," he remarked.

"Then why didn't you say something to me sooner?"

"What use. Got heap business when you come." He struggled to get up despite the fact that we had not yet finished bandaging him with strips of his shirt. "Got more business now. Me no squaw. Man—me! Peluk! *Tyune* still!"

Between us we supported him—no easy task considering his great bulk—until we reached the sled into which we laid him. He was too weak to do more than protest, but his voice was the same—drawling, pleasant, resonant. It took us five minutes of frantic energy to release dogs and sled, and all the time we momentarily expected to be interrupted by a rifle bullet. None came. When Jack ran ahead to lead the dogs and I fell to the handlebars to steady the sled with its burden, the shaman was sitting up with his back resting against the incline of the frame and his sturdy legs crossed.

"Been lissenin'," he rumbled. "No can hear nossings. Mus' be native mans got enough. Gone back me think. Give me rifles. Me load 'em up again, so if fools come can shoot more, ummh? Me very sorry no can run. Go more fas'. But good dogs, ummh? Very nice dogs. Go quick. Go strong."

As we slid away over the trail with the shaman fighting his weakness, weaving from side to side and determinedly forcing fresh cartridges into the rifles, I strove to hear what sounds might come from behind. It was perhaps five minutes before I heard one that I was not likely to forget. It was the high ululation of a timber wolf that had caught a scent. The shaman, too, caught that savage note of the wild and turned his head sidewise and cupped a hand over an ear. We heard it repeated. From still more distance came an answering wail and then another. Then, faintly, it arose to a scattered choral and sharply there cut in the staccato stabs of rifle shots. The shaman shouted to Jack to stop, and in that waiting pause listened intently. We heard two more shots and savage animal calls, but they were fainter, dying away. The shaman turned his head, settled himself comfortably in the sled and laughed.

"That good joke, ummh? One time wolf chase my white friend, nearly eatum. Now wolf come back chase damn fool Injuns, not us. Sure eat some, mebbe eat all! Very good if do, ummh? Hope so. Me no longer chief, ummh?" And he laughed as cheerfully as if he were unwounded and this one of the most humorous situations in which he had ever found himself. "But bes' we go on now. If wolf no get bellyful, mebbe come finish feed on us, ummh? Go now!"

The old rascal laid there in the sled chuckling for a long time as we fled down the moonlit trail. In time forebodings of pursuit by either wolves or human beings were dissipated and all sounds died away. We entered the final stretch leading through the forest outskirts of Malitka's village before I shouted to Jack to relieve me.

When I fell back to my turn at such rest as was afforded by the sled, the shaman was sound asleep with his great head lolling this way or that when the sled struck a bunch of hardened snow and bounced.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was morning when our tired dogs scented madame's village and began to run more eagerly and to give tongue. The noise awoke the shaman, who clutched the sides of the sled and pulled himself painfully upward.

"Think bes' go Lady's house," he said, then mumbled something and shook his head doubtfully. I thought I caught the words in his own tongue, as if he were still bewildered and soliloquizing, "She must decide what is to be done. Must tell her everything. Too bad. She can put all the blame on me."

His words weren't at all reassuring. If she had sent us out to slaughter, the sole hope we could have would rest in her relenting from her purpose and reprieving us. I believed we should have an advocate in the shaman, but was certain that if it came to a free-for-all battle in the village, his wound would prevent his putting up much of a struggle. I was weighing our complexities when we emerged from the forest trail, swung round through the clearing, and halted in front of the great house. The noise of our arrival had disturbed the whole village, and its population came running toward us just as the door which had so recently closed upon us opened and Malitka hastened forth.

Her whole manner betrayed her astonishment; but before she could speak the shaman turned and looked her full in the face and said, in his tongue, "Lady, I have brought the voyageurs back." He was climbing weakly from the sled as he spoke, and I assisted him until he stood upon his feet, though bent over as if in pain. He held his uninjured hand toward her and lifted his head with something akin to barbaric nobility as his voice gathered some of its old resonance. "You told me to speed them safely on their way and not to let them return. That I could not do! You told me to protect them, Lady, and I—I—have done my best!"

And then before I could either recover from my astonishment, or reach out a hand to assist him, he pitched forward in the snow.

"Done his best?" I blurted, forgetful that I was not supposed to understand his tongue. "My God! He's fought to the death for us! This is a man!" And as I spoke I sprang to lift him, and Jack, too, plunged forward to his assistance.

"He is wounded?" I heard madame cry.

"Yes, Malitka, badly, we fear," Jack answered, as we gathered the big, inert form up.

Instantly she was cool again and took command.

"Carry him inside to the room next the one you occupied," she said, "and put him in the bed." Then, reverting to the native tongue, she called a man by name and said, "Take the dogs to your place and care for them. The others of you people go back to your homes. See to it that you talk not too much among yourselves until I learn what all this means. Go back, I say. If I need the help of any of you I shall send."

"Madame," I shouted over my shoulder, for by now we were entering her door, "be sure to bring the rifles with you. Don't let the natives have them!"

I caught her sharp exclamation. My words had further warned her that there might be danger afoot. Yet one swift, backward look showed me that she was outwardly calm and self-possessed as she deliberately gathered the weapons from the sled. Already some of the natives were hastening homeward in obedience to her commands and others were standing sullenly in groups and staring at us with anything but friendly eyes.

We carried the shaman into the room she had indicated, laid him upon the bed and stripped him of his clothing. Not until then had I fully appreciated his splendid physique, his great muscular development, the full size of his torso. And not until then did Jack or I know that he had admitted only the most serious wound, the one we had so crudely bandaged, for he had refrained from mentioning that three other bullets had found marks. Those others that he had disdained to mention lest we lose time in bandaging them, had done the most damage. Although none of them was more than a flesh wound, loss of blood had sapped his strength. One bullet had torn through the great muscles of his back indicating that he had been on hands and knees when struck, another had ripped through the fleshy part of his thigh, as if he had been running forward when it came, and the third had grazed his arm with a savage slash. We had to cut most of his clothing from him to remove it.

"You said it," Jack muttered, while we ministered to him as best we could, "Peluk's all man!"

With what skill we possessed, aided by our crude knowledge of surgery, after satisfying ourselves that all the bullets had passed through, we cleansed his hurts with hot water Jack obtained from the kitchen, before Malitka entered.

"He's not a very pleasant sight," Jack protested, but almost scornfully she waved him aside.

"Don't be a fool!" she exclaimed, and without mock modesty examined him herself. "Leave him as he is," she said, and hastened from the room to return with a

surgical chest from which she took antiseptics, bandages, and surgeon's tape. "I have seen more wounded than either of you could have dreamed of in your worst nightmares," she said grimly. "I have held the heads of women disemboweled by Turkish swords; bandaged the feet of human beings whose naked soles had been shod with horseshoes by Turkish officers; heard the dying whispers of mangled Russian peasants who had suffered ruthless steel! For the love of pity! Let us not be foolish!"

Her cold vehemence appalled me. It was as if in that moment she had burst forth into long-suppressed expression, heedless of what she might reveal.

"Lift him up!" she ordered, and with white probing fingers estimated the wound in the shaman's shoulder.

"He is now blessedly unconscious," she said as she applied burning antiseptics to the wounds. "It is well. I have neither ether nor chloroform. But this work is thorough. His enormous vitality should do the rest. He will live."

She had skillfully and deftly bandaged him and turned away before she asked a question.

"Where did this happen?"

"Up on the trail from the mining camp," I answered.

She whirled and eyed me.

"What do you know about the mining camp?" she demanded.

Jack spared me the embarrassment of answering by moving toward her and saying, "The shaman took us there. There is no occasion for anger, Malitka. He took us there to save our lives, and there he fought for us, and from there he brought us, fighting on the way here."

The steadiness and readiness of his reply caused her to hesitate.

"We can talk about all that later, can't we?" he asked gently.

She glanced at the shaman, then at me, and then her eyes rested upon Jack the longest time of all. "Yes, I suppose that is best," she assented. And then suddenly she became all woman again, sympathetic, solicitous, and hastened to him. "And you are tired? You must be. I take it that you have been traveling all night."

"We have," he replied.

"Come to the living room, have something to eat, and rest before telling me what has taken place," she said.

"We could eat," said Jack, with his irrepressible smile.

"Then, if you two will go to the room you occupied before, and make whatever change you wish, I'll see that you are—fed!" she remarked, and for the first time since our return I saw her face relax into a faint smile.

"Changes such as we can make, Malitka," said Jack whimsically, "are few. Everything we had when we left here, save our rifles and that in which we stand, are—scattered over some hundred or more miles of trail."

For a moment she stood in the doorway staring absently at the floor and then with a slight shrug, said, as if answering some self-debated question of delicacy, "After all, one must bow to common sense. Necessity breaks all barriers. Wait here a minute."

She was gone but a few minutes in which time I gravely inspected the shaman. He seemed to have passed from the unconsciousness of wounds to the response of quiet sleep. His breathing had become regular and deep.

"For you," said Malitka to me when she returned, "I can provide garments that will more or less fit. But for you"—addressing Jack—"it's more difficult. I have sent to Peluk's house for a change of underwear and his spare clothing, because he is nearer your stature, although perhaps somewhat larger. He is a big man. However, until those arrive, you will find some few toilet necessities in your old room."

She turned and left us, and we trudged back to the room that had so recently been ours. I saw, laid out upon the bed, pressed but with undoubted indications that they had been recently removed from box, trunk, or storage, a neat and well-tailored suit of clothes. It was such as a prosperous business man might have worn in a style of perhaps ten to fifteen years previous. Also, undergarments to fit a man of my stature were there. A hip bath had been deposited in the center of the room into which a native servant poured pails of steaming water before I had time to examine my new garb.

"This is what I call luxury!" I heard Jack exclaim, and saw that he was lifting, piece by piece, a case of razors, silver military brushes, and a man's manicure set. "Where on earth do you suppose she got these?" he exclaimed. "Monogram on 'em, but I can't make it out. Anyhow, we can clean up a bit. You to the bath, me for a shave."

With his usual insistance upon taking every vicissitude as a joke, he made useless, irrelevant remarks while I took advantage of the tin tub and the clean undergarments. I had pulled on trousers when the native woman entered, without knocking, and proceeded to empty the tub and refill it for Jack, who, clean shaven, and humming a tune, sat on the edge of a chair. He had started to cast off his outer clothing when she reappeared with ordinary red flannel undergarments, woolen socks, and—strangest of all, a suit of clothes such as are called "hand-me-downs" in the outer world, which she threw upon the bed.

"Great Scott! Peluk must have been a swell when he wore these," Jack commented as he held the coat up to inspect it. "He's broader than I am, but—old man, this looks like New York, London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, or any other old town."

He plunged into the bath gratefully, while I wondered whether my coat might suit my requirements. It did. Not fitting perhaps as if tailored to my form but serviceable, I scrutinized it more closely. Surely this garment was tailor made. I threw back a coat lapel and turned outward the inner pocket, looking for a tailor's tab. It was there. It read: "Harris Barnes. No. F. 2167. Bretherton Bros., Fashionable Tailors, Fifth Avenue, New York."

I sat down on the nearest chair holding the garment in my hands and reread that startling scrawl. Harris Barnes, the man whom, or of whose fate, we sought! For a moment it seemed incredible. She had handed me a murdered man's garments to relieve my distress! And then I recalled other things, tried to correlate, but reasoned that at any rate, whether the man concerning whose existence or death it was my duty to learn were dead or alive, the garments must minister to my needs, and slipped into the coat. It fitted fairly well. My common sense told me that nothing less than dire urgency and utter lack of substitutes could have induced her to such an offering. Speechless, I threw it and the waistcoat off again, and utilized a razor. Clean once more, I picked up the silver brushes and inspected them. To me the ornate monogram was plain. It was decipherable as nothing other than "H. B."

"I'm an ax-handle's width across the shoulders, but I'll be hanged if the shaman's store clothes don't hang on me like a bag! You're going to be dressed like an Oxford Street model, and I've got to look like a cannibal in the clothes of a missionary off whom I've just dined," growled Jack.

His voice disturbed my thoughts. A man who could jest after all that we had so recently passed through, and in the midst of such a situation as we then were, impressed me as either irresponsible or a freak. The full light of the arctic day was breaking through the windows. Doubled as they were the frost had coated with lavish or delicate pattern nearly all the outer panes; but through one clear space of glass I could see the frowning darkness of forest beyond the clearing, the trail over which so short a time before we had struggled. Far away, climbing up as if to attack the very sky itself, towered the sharp white peaks that guarded that place of gold from which, through the valiance of but one man, we had escaped. In that moment, recognizing his great worth, my heart warmed to the shaman, my anxiety and compassion for him stabbed.

I walked to the door, flung it open, and slipped to the adjoining room. The door was ajar. Malitka was there, half kneeling above the shaman and listening intently to his breathing. She heard me enter, turned, arose, laid a finger upon her lips to impress silence and gestured me to withdraw. She was all woman in that moment. Yes, in that moment she was exquisitely and beautifully human.

With an exaggerated caution we passed through the door before she whispered, "He sleeps well. He will recover soon. I have seen so many thus, or worse, that—I tell you I know! It's not so much the wounds as exhaustion from the loss of blood and overfatigue that have beaten him. When he wakens he will be all right."

And then, as if for the first time she had discerned my garb, she started back, put her hands before her eyes, removed them, faltered, recovered, and laid a hand upon my coat. Her white fingers slipped across my sleeve as if in a caress of memory.

"I have honored you," she whispered. "There can be no nobility of man finer, cleaner than that of the one who last wore this."

I did not deliberately take advantage of a momentary emotion. It was nothing less than sheer stupidity, I think, a temporary confusion, that made me blurt out, in that same whisper lest we disturb the rest of

the man behind the door, "Barnes. Harris Barnes."

"Yes. It was his," she replied, and then, turning from all that was dead to present reality, she started back, caught her breath, came closer and with staring eyes fixed upon mine cried, "How did you know?"

I was so startled that I did not immediately answer, and now her hands caught the lapels of my coat not in caress but in demand, and she repeated her question. I had not time to answer before a door opened and through it came my partner, who, seeing us in that position, straightened, stopped, and then said, "Hello! What's up?"

Instantly she withdrew her hands, fell back a pace or two as if confused, and then said, "Nothing! I think your breakfast is waiting. If you gentlemen will come in and——"

She quietly walked to and through the door of the living room, beckoned us to seats and seated herself as imperturbably aloof as ever she had been. "Well," she said, "perhaps you can now explain what has happened. Why is it that you are again my guests? Why is it that you return as you do, in haste, with a wounded man who means very much to me, and whom I admire and respect, as your burden?"

Jack looked at me. I waited for him to act as spokesman.

"What is the mystery about it that makes both of you so slow to answer?" she asked, looking from one to the other of us.

"As far as I'm concerned, there's no mystery, Malitka," said Jack softly, continuing to use that Indian name as if he loved it and had used it with her before. "My partner can explain better than I can; first, because until last night when he heard the shaman's last talk before he collapsed, he mistrusted you; and second, because he understands this native lingo as well as if it were his own."

She turned indignant eyes upon me. I fancied that there was, furthermore, an expression of hurt and astonishment.

"You—you—mistrusted me? And—and you understand the native tongue? Then why——"

Her face set into colder expression and her eyes betrayed rising anger. I don't think it affected me much. I was not in love with her, though I admired her. And yet I felt that I had done her a mental injustice for which I must make apologies.

"Come!" she insisted. "You are a blunt man. One who I am certain has neither fear nor could be restrained by the thought that your words might hurt the feelings of either man or woman. You are not a parlor puppet who invents graceful speeches. You are one who deals in hard truths. So I ask you, what is the meaning of all this mystery?"

"You wish and shall have it all, cold, naked," I said, exasperated by her insistence.

"Truth is always—just that," she said.

"You shall have it," I replied. "When we came here—blundered here—in the plight you saw and appreciated, your manner did not indicate any particular welcome; your questions even before succoring us, spent as we were, could scarcely hasten trust and liking; your reluctance to——"

"You didn't understand! You don't understand yet!" she cried, in self-defense, as if denying imputations of inhumanity. "Do you think that I would turn half-dying men —one of whom was blind!—from my door?"

I paid no heed to her indignation. I had anticipated it.

"What we thought then or what were then your reasons for action, are of no importance now—save as they bear upon my explanation," I checked her. "It's sufficient that after the strange superstition in which your name was held, the hints of mystery and of fear and the warnings to avoid you and yours uttered by a well-meaning Indian some hundreds of miles from here, the manner of your reception was anything but encouraging. It was a confirmation of mystery and of doubt. For hundreds of miles around your village the natives dread you and yours, speak of you in whispers, or—speak not at all!"

"Incredible! Impossible!" she exclaimed.

"Malitka—Malitka—it's so." Jack's soothing voice interjected.

She turned upon him angrily, but his calm eyes, carrying his unabashed devotion, softened her as swiftly as do June rains the arctic snows.

"Jim can't explain it all, can he, if you get angry and interrupt him?"

With a gesture indicating that she was partially mollified, or at least ready for a truce, she turned to me and said, "I am sorry. Pardon me. Please tell me the whole of it."

"Well, Peluk and I struck up a friendship. I found out the secret of the gold

camp back there in the hills. Peluk doubtless told you that he learned that I knew of it, and——"

"I had no idea of that. He never told me!" she again interrupted.

It was my turn for surprise.

"If you had known of my knowledge, what would you have done?" I asked.

"Just exactly as I did. Pledged you to secrecy and pledged him to send you safely on your way."

"We are coming to an understanding," I said, looking at her with frank apology in my stare. "I thought you knew. I wonder if you know that natives who have ventured too close to this place have been ruthlessly driven away; that a white man and two natives were once followed for long, hard days and nights over the trail from here and killed; that——"

"My God!" she exclaimed in distraction. "You believed me capable of ordering tragedies like those?"

"I did!"

"I swear to you that until this moment I never knew of them! That I have never taken nor ordered life to be taken! That —who told you this?"

"Peluk, the shaman," I replied. "Can you then blame me for distrusting you at the moment when, in the nighttime, in our tent, we were fallen upon, fought, overpowered, and carried back to the very gold camp I had stumbled upon?"

She stared at me for a moment as if tearing from me the conviction of truth, and then, as if convinced, fell back into her chair with an air of bewildered resignation and surrender. Her face, white with the winter pallor of the North that through a protracted period of sunless days brands its mark, became even whiter with horror. In that instant I was convinced of her innocence and of the ugliness of my delusions and misconceptions.

"I am sorry," I said. "Very sorry! But that is what I thought. That is how I misjudged you. Malitka, I am mentally upon my knees at your feet. I think I can say no more. But I must tell you what happened after we left here."

She lifted her eyes and glanced at me, and I thought I read in them forgiveness. So with no further interruption I told her all that had taken place. No, not all, for I was ashamed to confess how, surreptitiously, I had learned the native tongue and practiced my ears to its understanding. Strangely enough, she did not then, or even after, question me as to that accomplishment.

I had but completed my confession and recountal when we were interrupted by the entrance of the klootch—a young unmarried woman—who came expecting to clear away the table. The food upon it had cooled, was untouched, so great had been our stress. Malitka awoke to immediate physical requirements and suggested that we breakfast before further conversation. We did so. I had not appreciated my hunger nor weariness. We ate silently, and grateful to me was the strong, hot coffee that ended our meal. But I could not avoid observing that Malitka was too distressed to indulge appetite. She appeared relieved when Jack and I, replete, waited for her to summon the native maid.

It was not until the latter had gone and we were again alone that she reverted to our subject. And then it was as if in that silent interim she had weighed all that had been told, correlated it as far as possible, and reached a conclusion. She resumed our conversation, as if there had been no pause.

"So, the conditions are now these: Peluk has, without orders or knowledge of mine, killed any or every one who jeopardized this place. He has fought for and protected you at his own expense. He promised me to send you upon your way, did his best, protected you in the end at the cost of other lives and his own wounds, and, unable to do more, returned you here—to me. I can no more weigh the situation than can you; but this I tell you—because I know these natives better than you—is not the finish. Those men back up there in the gold camp will not be content to let matters rest. They will cry for blood. The savage instinct in them will overcome all they have been taught. If you think they will submit easily, you are mistaken. These are fighting men. We have much to face, myself as well as you. And Peluk sleeps."

There was something of tragedy in her final words, "Peluk sleeps!" The swift, tragic news on the eve of Waterloo that Napoleon Bonaparte was desperately ill and incapacitated when nations trembled in the balance, could have conveyed no more import than did the shaman's incapacitation to us three human beings of the white race in a village of mere hundreds—all of whom, how-

ever, might become enemies while the man who mastered all our future was inert.

"Madame Malitka," I said, after she had reverted to silence as if having nothing more to say, "have I now your forgiveness for having mistrusted you? Is there other amend I can make?"

Even then she weighed my confession for a moment before committing herself.

"Yes," she said with a perturbed but frank smile, "I can't blame you. And—yes—we are quits. I think—I think we are destined to become friends—fast friends."

Time proved it so. Of all women I have known in this world, through which I so much alone have adventured, I have known none who might take her place in my affection and esteem.

"Then," said I gently, "can you not tell me of Harris Barnes, the quest of whom brought us here? If there is anything you would conceal I give you my word of honor your wish shall be respected. And, what is more, I shouldn't ask you of him, were it not that this is our mission. For its accomplishment I have accepted money, and am bounden. If we escape from this predicament, my search must go on—to the end. Can you not assist me?"

Both Jack and I watched her as she sat there hesitant and distressed. Her agitation was manifested by the way in which her white fingers, resting in her lap, intertwined themselves and twisted together. She looked at me questioningly, seemed satisfied, and then stared at Jack. There was a vast difference in her regard of him. I was aware that she was more concerned in what effect any admission she might make would have in that quarter than upon me. Somehow I had sympathy with her then, feeling that to her this was a prodigiously vital moment, in which she must cast precious and valued emprises upon the scales of fate. I knew, too, that she was brave enough and honest enough to dare. Finally she looked away, deliberately disengaging herself from us, and fixed her eyes on the frosty window.

"Yes, I can assist you," she said very quietly. "Harris Barnes was my husband. He brought me here. Here he died. Here he is buried. His grave is up there on a high hill, wind swept, facing summer suns because he loved them, fearless of winter's snows because he braved them. That is my answer. You may make use of it. It may cost me my life."

"Cost you your life?" both Jack and I exclaimed.

Many years have passed since that hour, but clear and vivid it and its emotion return to me—Malitka sitting there, white-faced and as if at bay—my comrade half risen from his chair as though about to spring toward her, his lean face with its resolute chin thrust forward, his eyes fixed upon her with the unmistakable light of a great affection—and I, grizzled, with a skin seamed, wrinkled and hardened by years of desert suns, jungle sweats, and mountain winds, nearly old enough to be father to both, absorbed in what she had admitted as much as in what she might further say—the picture all comes back to me. The room had become so still that its tiny intimate sounds became loudly audible; the crackling of the flames when a half-consumed log sagged, threw upward a cloud of sparks, and burst into broader blaze; the ticking of the clock that stood on top of the library shelf; the monotonous droning song of some native servant sweeping the hallway; a faint clash of crockery from the far end of the house and the barking of dogs playing somewhere out in the still, cold forenoon whose clear light made of the windows great spots of brilliance.

For a confused instant it seemed incredible that all the long hardships of our quest, the dangers, the neck-to-neck races with death, the subsequent tragedies, had been answered in such few sentences from Malitka's lips and the object of our mission so unexpectedly accomplished in full.

No longer mistrusting or fearing this extraordinary woman, but pitying her for what she must so bravely have endured and overcome, I sat quietly waiting for her to speak what I surmised must be nothing less than a confession to the man who loved her and whom she loved. I appreciated somewhat the agony of her position and, could I have done so, would have spared her the humiliation which might be involved in the full candor of words. I don't think she rebelled against it. She was too brave to evade an issue. But I do believe that her long hesitancy was due to her great desire to formulate what she must say into an appeal. *Portia,* fighting for her love, did that. It was but natural.

Both women and men have, through all time, battled for an ideal; both have gathered and fought as tribes, as countries, as na-

tions; but the sternest fight ever waged is, after all, that of man for woman, or woman for man. The fight for love! And it is only we who have lost, and must forever dwell in the despair of irrevocable loneliness and defeat who can comprehend the meaning of such an issue.

CHAPTER XV.

I said that Malitka hesitated long to reply to our startled exclamations; but I suppose that it really measured less than half a minute. Human emotions work with such terrific rapidity.

"I am Russian," she said, as if it were necessary to explain her beginnings. "Once called Krasta, princess of a once royal house."

The statement further aroused both my comrade and myself; for both of us had lived in that enormous domain whose internal strivings and dissensions, luxuries and destitutions, kindnesses and cruelties have been perpetual mysteries to those dwelling outside its borders. My comrade had passed his youth in Moscow, that distant, glamorous, ever somber heart of the Russian race. In St. Petersburg I, as a youth had—— But—of me nothing matters—nothing is important or even noteworthy, save this—that I knew Russia, thought or spoke with equal facility in its tongue, knew its traditions, and much of its events. "Princess Krasta!" The name leaped up through years of forgetfulness, recalling contradictory tales, sometimes of blood and ruin, of merciless death and callous murder, or again as an unsullied synonym for humanity, justice, liberty. It was with something akin to amazement that I recalled that long-forgotten name, wondering why and when it had ceased to be one of the compelling ones in the world's interest.

To me it was preposterous that here, in this isolation surpassed only by the majesty of the unknown and unconquered poles, we should listen to the words of one who had once been a meteor flaming across the skies of dispute. So this had been Krasta's end—to be ruler in an unknown Indian village in the very heart of an unknown land! This was the explanation of her disappearance. It was because she had reached this vast solitude and therein encompassed herself that she was no longer sought and so little remembered. Ten years, remorseless, insidious, relentless, had conquered all memories of both friendships and animosities.

"Yes," she went on, "it was I who escaped from Siberia, and was—somewhat sought for by the men of the great white czar. But I wasn't what some of them said I was. I did not betray my caste. I fought against an autocracy, because I believed it was unfair. In folly I joined an anarchistic society because I believed it the last hope—until I discovered that futile murder was its highest aim. Fools! No system dies with the death of one—no, or of a hundred men! They accused me of betraying them, but—by my faith in God—I never did! They wouldn't leave me alone—they threatened death. Perhaps you recall the time when it became a question whether or not the United States would enter into an agreement with Russia permitting the latter to extradite escaped Siberian prisoners?"

I nodded.

"Of course nothing could be more certain than my death if I were returned to Russia. Indeed I would not have gone. The perdition of one's soul by suicide, it seemed to me, could be no worse. I was in despair and in hiding—when I first met Harris Barnes. He was a very brave and very noble man. He sympathized with me, loved me, asked me to marry him. I liked him, admired him, but did not love him. He laughed in that big hearty way of his and—overpersuaded me. I do not think he ever regretted it. I never did, for he was a rock to lean upon, an unselfish guardian and a considerate husband. That my affection never reached the heights of love was through no fault of his nor of mine; but it did contain the content of perfect friendship, comradeship, partnership.

"Partly because he had loved adventure and the wilds, partly because we had but small capital and he hoped that we might find fortune in the unknown interior of this country, and partly because we were both convinced that here I could be secure until time led my enemies to forgetfulness, we put all our funds into a trading outfit and, covering our tracks as best we could, made our way to Alaska."

She gave a tiny shrug of her shoulders as if throwing off unpleasant memories and looked at us. We had rested ourselves back in our chairs, absorbed in not only her words but the music of her voice, so well modulated, so distinct, and yet with that softness

that is found only in the cultured Italian or cultured Russian tone and inflection.

"You two men know what it is to suffer! Well, so do I! Harris Barnes and I lost more than half of that small trading outfit, the lives of four natives and, worse still, many sled dogs in that trail through which you came. I remember, when we finally came to a place where we could find fuel, shelter, and camp, and took stock of our depleted resources, how it appealed to me as absurd that one of the heaviest weights of the outfit, and seemingly the most useless, was a chest of carpenter's tools and a bundle of enormous whipsaws! Almost as worthless seemed a chest of medicines and surgical instruments that I had insisted on bringing because—— Well, I haven't explained, perhaps, that at one time I had an ambition to become a woman physician, thinking I might give my services to the poor—and could have easily taken my degree. At any rate, such is the fact.

"Food on which our lives must depend was lost in that catastrophe, but medicaments and tools, upon which we could not live, were saved. It was—ironical! I sat down in that débris of salvage, and despaired. I wept, for I am but woman, after all, with all the weaknesses of my sex. Harris came to me, I can still remember, and lifted me up with his strong, kindly hands, and words of comfort. 'Girl, it's pretty rough luck,' he said; 'but never mind. You've known worse. We've still got each other!'

"I think I came nearer to loving him then than ever before. He had the exquisite and marvelous ability to accept even the worst with a smile. We took stock of our resources. We had scarcely anything but heavy material left. We had scarcely any food supplies. It was as if a malevolent fate had denuded us of all our most vital possessions and jeeringly spared us everything that could not save our lives."

For a moment or so she pondered, frowning as if the terrors of a past vicissitude and peril were still keenly felt.

"But that wasn't the worst," she resumed, still staring abstractedly into the fire. "In the night, after the winds had died and the clouds cleared and the stars shone, our surviving half dozen natives, presumably after consultation and filled with superstitious dread of ill omens, took most of our dogs, all of our firearms, half of our food, and slipped away over the back trail. We were left alone. Marooned in a white isolation! Helpless! Hopeless!

"Even that did not break the spirit of the man whom I trusted above any other I had ever met. The faint moans of the pine trees around our camp to me sounded dirgelike. To him they whispered encouragement. Once he said to me, 'They talk. They say that they have survived, though rooted fast, and that we who still have the ability to move and escape the blasts must not despair.'

"We passed three days there, while he opened every parcel of our possessions, deliberated, and threw aside everything unessential to our survival. He was repairing our broken sled in the noontime of the third day when we heard the yelping of dogs. A solitary man guided and restrained them. It was Peluk.

"You two were in desperate straits when first I saw you. Your dogs were dying on their feet. One of you was snow-blind. But I tell you now that your plight was less pitiable than his when he staggered into our camp. His hands and face were blackened with camp smoke and frost. His feet were frostbitten. He moved upon stumps of half-dead members. His eyes were bloodshot with cold and fatigue. His bones protruded outward until they seemed stretching to the utmost their covering of skin. But there glared from his indomitable eyes an unquenched and invincible resolution. He could not speak. He could but stagger, and yet he tried to smile.

"You've seen his smile when the end was very near. Well, that is the way he came to us—Peluk, the shaman! One of his starved dogs fell upon the snow and was dead before we could give it food. He fainted, as if his determination had been overstrained and had suddenly lost its last spark of power in a momentary relaxation. Pitying such horrifying distress, we ministered to him from our scant stores, and when he recovered consciousness, while my husband and I were holding him up and pouring warm liquid foods between his teeth, he opened his eyes and peered at us and smiled again. There was something ghastly in it—quite as if a man long dead had opened his eyes and then grinned.

"His first words were those of bewilderment, inconsequential—but in my Russian native tongue!

"And so it was but natural that when he

had recovered sufficiently to speak it was in that tongue that I asked him who and what he was."

She paused, shifted her chair, and faced us.

"I tell you that Peluk is a remarkable man. You don't know him as well as I do. I am qualified to speak. He is the half-breed son of a Russian trader and a native woman. The trader was an outcast, but all that was great in him, and intelligent, was inherited by his offspring. When the trader prospered and gained riches he deserted, willingly or reluctantly, that native woman and the son that, I think, he loved. In any event he went back to Russia, intending to be gone for but a few months, and—he never returned. The native woman died. The boy, Peluk, left alone, resolved to seek his father.

"He went to Russia, and in Moscow, after long search, learned that his father was dead. I don't know what happened to him after that. I presume that it was a bitter lesson; that it led him to hate those who scorned him because of his mixture of blood and indefinite origin. That seems to be the way of human beings. Any specimen that is not well defined, or physically whole, or cannot account for its breeding is—somehow—aloof. In the end this half-breed hungered for the people from whom his mother sprang and came back to what had become nothing more than a squalid native village."

I could not refrain from thinking how completely he had fooled me into believing that all he knew of the outside world was Juneau and Kadiak, this crafty, determined man who had traveled over so much of the globe, and how little I had surmised the character that was masked by his ever-ready and disarming grin.

"Well," Malitka continued. "Peluk forced himself upon his mother's people until through fear, and perhaps superstition, they were fairly well subjugated. He claimed that he had, while away, studied the black art—if one could call it that in native language. But there could be no doubt that his aim and ambition was their betterment. Possibly, too, he had in view his own prosperity. If so, however, I never heard him admit it. Then, in the second season after his return, came a plague that is similar to influenza—then called la grippe—and his people were dying like flies despite his crude efforts to save them. He was desperate, and made up his mind that if they were to be saved he must go to the nearest white settlement and secure medical remedies. He started with two companions. In three days both were dead. But he kept on, relentlessly forcing himself and dogs to make haste. And it was thus he found us, when probably another day would have found him also dead upon the trail."

She emphasized her words with a gesture of her hands, but did not pause.

"You never saw greater determination than his! When he learned by my speech that I was Russian, and after a time sat up, his eyes fell upon the medicine stores. He actually babbled in the haste with which he explained his needs; but when I told him that I knew something of the physician's and surgeon's arts, he became almost incoherent. He kept repeating over and over one phrase in his own tongue whose sound I remembered and later understood. It was to the effect that his gods had sent me to succor him and his people. That as Mohammed had come to another race so now I had come to his. His gratitude was stupendous, childlike, absurd!

"We could not induce him to rest until he had regained strength. He insisted that we must start at once, lest his people die. He demanded that we throw away everything but the drugs, a small supply of food and our sleeping bags, and swore to me that we should lose not so much as a single article and that he himself would return for them in due time. On the next day we decided to take the risks and accede to his appeals. And it is the truth that, despite all he had suffered, that ragged, scarecrow skeleton of a man taxed us and our dogs to the limit of endurance, ever urging us and our dogs on as if he were half mad, or we fleeing from rather than into a pestilence. The journey was terrible! But it was nothing compared to the ghastliness that was to come when three days later we reached this village.

"There were so many dead that the survivors had not troubled to bury them. In some of the barrabaras whole families lay on the earthen floors, in corners, anywhere—as death had overcome them.

"Despite the fatigue of our forced journey, the shaman had regained some strength, buoyed up by hope as well as food, and now he took command in a way that was as stern and inflexible as one could possibly conceive.

"'You tell me what they must do to save themselves,' he declared to me, 'and by the gods of the icons of your own land, I swear they shall do it! If they do not, with my own hand I will slay those who disobey!'

"What could one do with such a man? Such a phenomenal mixture of ruthless savage, enwisdomed wanderer, and benevolent despot! Willing to kill those he would save! Intent on forcing succor upon those who had not the intelligence to be succored and fought against it! He issued my orders and saw that they were scrupulously carried out. He saw to it that the dead were carried to temporary scaffolds, outside the village, scorned the native rites of placing the dead man's possessions by his side in those elevated tombs, and when any one complained fell upon him with fists, feet, and the threat of a knife that was ready to cut a throat. A benevolent murderer, this Peluk, in that time of distress!

"I never knew until long afterward that he had asserted that I had come down to him in a cloud of snow and that my husband had appeared with me carrying my chest of medicines and surgical tools together with all my personal possessions, strapped upon his back. Another miracle, for the weight would have been some hundreds of pounds! But what convinced them more than any other proof, was the fact that between us we saved their lives. My credit for being heaven-sent was secure, and his—the shaman's—for being my discoverer and agent—was established. Moses had no more authority over the children of Israel than was ours over these natives.

"Within a few days more our lost possessions were returned. Not even the tiniest and most useless thing was missing. And it was on the following night that the shaman came to us in the barrabara that had been placed at our disposal, and after making certain that we were alone, disclosed some of his ambitions. He wished, first of all, to assist his mother's people. He declared that to do so he must have an autocratic power.

"He laid out a plan whereby he was to be subordinate to us—my husband and me. And then he took from a wrapping and unrolled from a strip of tanned moosehide two great nuggets of gold. 'That,' he said, 'is the key to the white man's ambition or power. I found it. My people know not what it is. I do. I cannot tell how much more may be found in that distant place from which this came; but if you will assist me to do what I wish we shall learn. You will do so, because it must be that which you seek. Otherwise, you shall go your way, whither you list, assisted by me and my people, and I must try alone.'

"Of course our agreement was immediate. We had come to this country in the hope of enriching ourselves as well as in quest of refuge."

Malitka dropped back into her chair with an attitude of finality amounting to relaxation.

"There's not much more to tell," she said. "Harris Barnes was at first infatuated with the prospect of gold and latterly with the creative impulse. The barrabaras gave way to well-built houses. The natives appreciated the values of thrift and better living. They starved no more in seasons when there was no game. I don't know by what method of selection Peluk admitted others; but slowly they came until we now have some hundreds. Peluk and my husband opened up the big placer deposits back in the mountains, worked them, and Peluk has made several hard trips out to buy supplies and manufactured articles for the comfort of ourselves and the villagers. Has he ever mentioned these trips to you?"

"Yes," I answered; but I did not tell her that on at least one of those trips he had ruthlessly destroyed those who endeavored to follow him and learn whence he came. She was troubled enough without that additional burden. And, furthermore, trying to be just and consider the shaman's actions from his personal viewpoint I was not certain that I blamed him much. He was, in a small way, a Kosciusko fighting for the welfare of his own people, and if he had to adopt merciless measures when his people's welfare—yes, their very existence—was endangered——

Malitka's voice disturbed my thoughts.

"The results you have seen. Our people are comfortable, better disciplined, and, I like to think, nearer civilized than any other natives of which I know."

"But," I asked, still bearing my mission in mind, "of Harris Barnes——" and paused, not wishing to bluntly ask her for proofs of his death.

She moved quietly to her desk in the corner of the room, took from a drawer a metal

safety box and returned with some papers in her hands.

"There," she said, opening one and handing it to me, "is our marriage certificate. And there two photographs, one of him alone, one of us together. Here is a photograph of his grave that I took but last summer. Those, with my solemn statement of his death, should be sufficient for your purpose. He died nearly five years ago of pneumonia."

So, whoever the scar-faced man killed by Peluk had been, it evidently was not Barnes after all.

"As far as I personally am involved in this estate," she went on, "I want nothing of it. Furthermore, I should prefer that those interested know as little of me as possible—or be permitted to think that I, too, am dead."

"But—surely," I protested, "the widow's share of that inheritance is worth consideration."

She made a tiny gesture of contempt with her hands.

"Worthy of consideration? Harris Barnes took precautions to provide for me," she said. "He made two trying trips into the outside world to insure that point. He took gold from the mine to make certain. If I were ever to leave here and again live in the outer world all my needs would be adequately provided for."

"But, Malitka, why not go out? Why bury yourself here any longer?" Jack demanded, leaning toward her.

"Your government might turn me over to the tender mercies of Russia," she said. "And—I have not been unhappy here—until you men came. When you are gone I shall be——"

Her hands clenched as if miserably fighting against loneliness and despair. I read all that she concealed in that instant. My heart ached for her. I looked at Jack to see him bending forward, his whole attitude one of love, sympathy, and the desire to shield and protect. I jumped to my feet, stepped across, and for the first time laid a familiar hand on her half-drooping shoulder. She did not resent it. She looked up at me gratefully as if comprehending my attitude.

"Malitka," I said, "Don't be a fool! Life can't give us all we have perhaps craved. Nearly all our ambitions, attained or unattained, eventually prove themselves to have been follies. That which is above all else is love. I know because—I failed!"

I turned from her and moved toward the door.

"Stay! I have yet to tell you that I appreciate you and your great heart, and that——"

Her voice was broken, but I paid no heed. For at least once in my life I knew what to do. I reached the door and my foot awkwardly caught the corner of a rug so that I had to straighten it to close the door behind me. I had a glimpse of my friend rushing forward as if to throw himself down by her side, of Malitka suddenly collapsed and bending over an arm of her chair, and then I succeeded in closing the door and leaving them alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

Troubled and fatigued I went to our old room and went to sleep. When I awoke the room was in darkness. I climbed out, lighted the lamp and looked at my watch. It was six o'clock in the evening. I had slept the day through. Looking at Jack's bed I discovered him there, sleeping soundly. I made a quick toilet and tiptoed from the room. In the hallway another door opened and from its shaft of light stepped Malitka.

"Ah," she said, "you have rested. I have just returned from the village."

"Have they learned about—about what happened up there on the mountain trail?" I asked, keenly alert again.

"Not yet," she replied; "but—I am worried in view of what may take place when they do."

She moved ahead of me to the big living room, where the fire blazed in the grate, throwing its quivering shadows over all. I started to light the lamp, but she laid a hand upon my arm and detained me.

"No, not yet," she said. "I want to talk to you and—I'd rather have the room as it is."

I tossed the match I had lighted into the grate. She put both hands on my shoulders, looking up at me from the shadows.

"It is about—about your friend," she said. "I can ask you for the truth. You will neither lie nor evade with me. You are not that kind of a man. I trust you and your honesty, for you are older, wiser than either he or I. You are one who knows much of the world."

"What is it you want to ask?" I questioned.

We moved nearer the grate and seated ourselves. She did not speak for a moment or two, and when she did looked at the flames rather than at me.

"Come, Malitka," I said gently, "you want to ask about John—and I can answer. He is clean, brave, loyal, and without guile. He is my dearest friend despite disparity of years."

"I had no intent to question you as to his character," she said quietly, "but—but to speak—of mine!"

"Of yours!"

"Oh, Hathaway, I love him!" she cried in distress. "He loves me. He told me so after you left the room to-day. And—I am still young. I have known no great love like this. But—is it fair to him—the man I love—to give way and go with him? Is it better that I send him away and—live and die here alone—knowing that I did not break his career, his possibilities? I can do it! I learned suffering and self-sacrifice long, long ago. He asked me to leave all this—to marry him—to begin life with him anew! He held happiness before my eyes that have known so much of sorrow! He made me forget all that I have been and all that I am! But—is it fair to him? What can I do? What should I do?"

There was a lament of agony and indecision in her voice. It was not easy for me to answer. I was very fond of John Braith and I pitied her. His life, very full of promise, was ahead of him, and hers seemed wrecked, finished. I wondered if it were possible for one who had been such a rebellious soul, such a stormy petrel swirling above the muddy, bloodstained maelstrom of Russian waters, to become helpmate to any man. And then came the recollection that even the stormy petrel when its wings are worn and tired, is eventually driven to rest.

"You have not answered," she said.

"How can I?" I replied. "How can I know whether, if you desert this solitude, which is after all a secure haven, and venture into the complexities of the world outside, you may not again be involved in futile plots and conspiracies?"

"No, that is impossible," she declared. "My experience was too bitter, my disillusionment too profound. I still think that some of my ideals were brave ones and clean; but sometimes the potter finds that the clay beneath his thumb will not work. And it is the one who abandons an irrevocable failure and profits by his mistake who is worth while. I see now that it was but a silly conceit to hope that I, insignificant, could alter conditions that have arisen through centuries of growth. One cannot obliterate a pyramid, created by tens of thousands, with his naked hands. No, I could not and would not make any further attempt. As an outcast princess I have no desire to return to a court life, and as an outcast communist I have no desire for that association. All I wish is peace, quietude, and love. And so, knowing all this, can you answer, my friend?"

She arose with the infinite grace of her bodily perfection and dropped upon her knees beside my chair, resting her arms thereon and looking up into my weather-beaten face as if I were a judge about to issue a decree. I put one of my hands over her clasped ones, and, looking into her eyes said, "Malitka, will you promise to abide by that decision?"

"Yes," she said with an almost childish faith, "I will."

"Then," said I, "there can be but one way. You must leave here with us. You and my friend must follow the call of the heart. In that way alone lies content."

To my considerable embarrassment and before I could prevent, she bent forward and kissed my hand, rested her forehead upon it and wept, not as most women weep, with sobs, but quietly, as if through some immense relief and happiness. After a moment and very gently I lifted her up and, with an arm about her shoulders, directed her back to her chair.

Unaccustomed to emotional situations of this character I could only talk to her with the intent of diverting her mind. I fell to discussing projects for our escape and was relieved when, after a time, she was soothed and practical again. But I was to have one more clear glimpse of the directness of her methods when we were unexpectedly interrupted by Jack, who, refreshed, clean, and youthful, entered the room.

"Hello," he said, pausing inside the door, "afraid to have the lamps lighted?"

Before I could offer any reply she had arisen and walked swiftly across to meet him.

"Jack," she said scarcely above a whisper,

"I have decided. I don't care to live without you. I—I am going with you!"

He caught her in his arms and held her unresisting, and looked down into her face for a very long time; at least it seemed long to me, until, suddenly aware of the indelicacy of my scrutiny, I turned away and stared down into the depths of the fire blaze. Their murmured, almost inaudible words came to me as from a great distance, as if already they had stepped forever from my life, had forgotten me, or in their new compact of love and faith were heedless of my presence. I suppose there are moments in the emotional lives of men and women when, though they might be surrounded by a multitude, they would still be alone. Like Sydney Carton and the frail little seamstress in that marvelous "Tale of Two Cities," who interchanged a tender, pitiful farewell at the foot of the guillotine and were heedless of their appallingly murderous surroundings.

I was thinking of this when they came to me, one on each side, and each caught me by an arm and then by a hand. And so, standing there, I looked from one to the other, gravely considering my share of responsibility in perhaps piloting them together for what might be a fair or disastrous voyage. And yet, studying them as we stood there together, I felt that my advice had been sound.

That is a long time ago! I am old and have gained such wisdom as comes from age. But to this hour I have no regret for throwing my weight in the scales that so nicely balanced their fate. I flatter myself that this tiny weight of mine was thrust on the right side.

It was not until after supper that we returned to the hard realities and to planning how best we could escape from this semibarbarous environment to the open trails. We would have given much then for the sage counsel of the shaman who lay fast asleep. We could arrive at no decision without him. And so, in suspense, we at last retired.

Long companionship with vicissitude is a stern teacher. It cultivates and renders acute many senses that are, I presume, dormant and never stimulated in those who lead placid, humdrum lives. Either because of that or because I am no light sleeper, anyway, I awakened at an early hour upon hearing through log walls the alarm of village dogs. I was on my feet and at the window wiping away a tiny coating of frost before fully alert; and then, peering through, I saw two men coming down the gold trail. In the wan light of arctic morning they appeared as black spots of evil sliding wearily across the pallor of the snow. They advanced abreast and disappeared from sight around the corner of the Great House like ghosts of ill omen. The clamor of the dogs increased in crescendo to full cry, and then died away. I went back to my bed, pictured to myself for a time their advent in the native houses which must be their destination, the excitement aroused by their recountal of a tragic tale, and the slow spreading, as morning advanced, of native agitation and discussion to determine our fate. I had neither further desire nor ability to sleep, but lay awake for a long time. From the interior of the house came sounds of movement in a habitual routine, but from the outland of the village nothing loud enough to be audible. At last I awakened Jack.

"I'm getting up, old man," I said, "and perhaps it might be wise for you to do the same. I saw two runners from the gold camp an hour or so ago."

He sat up in his bed and gained the floor.

"Well, whatever is coming will come, then, and we haven't long to wait," he said.

I was the first one out and with a fur parka thrown over my shoulders unbarred the front door and stepped upon the veranda. From the village below me smoke climbed upward from each chimney. Off in the distance, far beyond the end of the street, the white gates of the hills stood clear against the cold blue of the morning skies. A star or two was still visible as if proud of final resistance against advancing daylight. Here and there a fur-clad figure moved from house to house. There was nothing to indicate either physical or human storm. Malitka, with a newly found confidence of camaraderie, joined me and put a trusting arm through mine before I was aware of her presence.

"Why up so early? Has anything happened?" she asked.

I told her what I had seen and of my fears. She stared thoughtfully at the village.

"One can never know. But—I don't think we can do more than wait to see how the

news will affect them. They are so like children, after all. Children with great physical strength and immature minds. I hope—no—I think!—that I can control them. We shall see."

We breakfasted undisturbed, talking as only those in suspense can talk, and still there was no sign of excitement in the village beyond a visible movement of more visitations than were customary. Malitka went to the shaman, returned to say that he was much improved and wished to see me, and I immediately went to his room. He had propped himself up on his pillows, and his black eyes twinkled as he looked at me.

"So," he said in the native tongue, "you have learned to speak this language or at least to understand it?"

I nodded and grinned back at him with as much cheerfulness as his own.

"Also thou speakest, friend, my other native tongue of Russian?" he went on, using the Russian tongue and the friendly diminutive. "Ah, Grayhead, there lurks much beneath that old thatch of thine! Thou hast the wisdom of the silent tongue and the swift ear. What talks thou and I might have had could I have known this sooner. Strange tales of many lands; stories that I cannot speak in my halting English; news for which I hunger of cities that thou hast visited since I strode through their streets."

I was astonished by his manner of speech, indicating that his was no mean education in that difficult tongue of the white czar's land. I blurted something to this effect, and he lifted deprecating hands.

"My father was a well-educated man. He did not neglect me in my childhood. For two years I earned my way in a Moscow university by humble service, despite the contumely of my classmates for one of my birth. There I was a despised menial. Here I have been, if not a king, at least a prime minister to a queen."

He chuckled derisively, and then abruptly his face became grave and his eyes searching.

"What do you and your friend propose to do?" he asked.

I hesitated momentarily, wondering if it were wise in his condition to run the risk of exciting him. He appeared to read my thought and added, "Speak then, friend—for thou *art* that, I have proof. Be not afraid that these scratches can cause fever to one of my physical constitution. Tell me all. Decisions must be made."

Requiring no further assurance I told him bluntly that our sole desire was to escape back to the coast, our mission having been performed. Of that mission also I told him, while he rested quietly, now and then asking a terse question, now and then uttering a comment. But I reserved until the very last that information that I feared might arouse him to an angry refusal.

"Madame Malitka intends to accompany us," I said. "She is betrothed to my friend."

Somewhat to my astonishment he betrayed nothing more than a thoughtful consideration of this phase of our affairs, and for a time shifted his eyes from mine and looked absently at the window's light. He seemed pondering like some wise old philosopher before passing judgment.

"Well," he said at last with a sigh, "whether I like it or not, it cannot be helped. I guessed their affection or at least hers from the very solicitude with which she bade me care for him when you started away from the village; from the evasion in her eyes when she mentioned his name; from her distress when I brought you back. Compared with us, Old Grayhead, they are young. It is the way of youth to love, to mate, to have great and mutual visions. I have played a good hand, but fate has redealt the cards. The time comes when I must play alone. I must think how best to serve. The way may be difficult. I must think!"

He turned his head away and I took it as a dismissal. I left him there brooding over his new problem, and returned to the living room. I entered just in time to hear Jack, who was standing at the window, exclaim, "Malitka, they're coming!"

Both she and I hastened to the window and looked out to see, suddenly emerging from nearly every house as if belched out in response to some signal, a mob of men, while squaws stood in the doorways restraining their children as if it had been previously agreed that whatever was afoot was too serious for their participation. A tall native with a bandage about his head was haranguing them and shaking his fists in our direction. And then, taking the lead, he moved rapidly toward the Great House followed by his crowd of adherents. The menace was upon us.

CHAPTER XVII.

Jack and I ran to the hall and seized our rifles from the antlers, but Malitka hastily restrained us.

"No! No!" she cried. "You must not appear with firearms! You must not. It might precipitate matters. Let me speak to them. I can control them, I am certain."

She threw the door open and stepped out, and Jack muttered, "Well, she shan't go alone. We must be close at hand."

We followed her outside, and at sight of us the leader of the mob shouted in a great bellowing voice that could be heard above the chorus of angry murmurs, "There they are! The white dogs who brought trouble!"

In but a few strides more they halted in front of us, some visibly angry, others merely sullen, and some few on the outskirts who stood doubtfully as if questioning the wisdom of their action.

"You, Barseek! What is the meaning of this?" Malitka cried out in her clear voice.

"You know as well as we!" the man replied without any sign of respect. "Your heart has softened for these white men of your race. You would have sent them away alive to return here with an army of miners, seeking gold of which these brought news! You and Peluk would have betrayed us. He tried to blind every one and get them away until he found that more than twoscore of us were following on his trail to make an end of these white men; and then he fooled us again, and when that would no longer serve, killed the man we had chosen as chief. Peluk shall die! These white men shall die! If you give them over to us, your life shall be spared. We waste no time!"

His voice had arisen as he spoke until it reached a shrill scream. Malitka never proved her metal more than then; for she laughed in a way that could only exasperate him more. She lifted a hand and pointed to the mob of natives behind him.

"And you?" she demanded. "You whom I have made what you are, what have you to say for yourselves? Whence came this Barseek? He is not of your tribe. He is an outlander from the Koyukuk whom Peluk found starving on a game trail. And Peluk saved his life. Now he would murder Peluk and my friends. What have you to say for yourselves?"

Some of the foremost Indians shifted uneasily on their feet and averted their eyes, and she scanned them one by one; but a voice in the midst of the crowd shouted, "Don't let her blind you with palaver! We can talk to her after we have finished what we came to do."

An angry growl of approval convinced me that the situation was far more desperate than Malitka reckoned, and I edged a little farther forward to be in position to defend her if there came a rush. It was too late to possess ourselves of the rifles that by her request we had left behind, and I regretted our acquiescence to her wish.

"Blind you with my palaver?" she answered readily enough and in the same calm voice. "When have I ever tried to blind you? What were you before I came? What are you now? Does that look as if I would betray you? Answer that, you men who have known me since first I came and you others who were taken in after this was no longer a hungry tribe, living in igloos, starving when the game trailed northward, and dying when the Great Spirit scourged." Her words had a palpable effect. She waited for a moment to give them time to consider, and then spoke again in a voice that, to me at least, had a note of sorrowful appeal. "Oh, my people, that it should have come to this!" she cried. "That you whom I have cured when ill and taught to live should lose faith in me because you have been led astray by false counsels!"

I thought for an instant that her words were having favorable effect. I have no doubt that with a few sentences more she would have calmed the majority of her hearers and won them to reason; but the man Barseek, savage that he was, was no fool. Sensing that the swing of the pendulum was against him he abruptly turned and lifting both arms above his head, cried:

"Hold! Be not bewitched! Listen to wisdom. The reason why ye have all these comforts is not because of her or Peluk, but because ye worked with your own hands and slew those who came from the far lands outside. Let but one white man know that gold is in the earth up there in our hills and woe shall fall upon you even as twilight in winter! Let but one white man go from here and——"

He got no further in what promised to be a persuasive speech, for a deep, booming voice cried:

"Barseek! Turn this way!"

Barseek whirled on his feet as did we. There in the doorway stood the shaman with his blue shirt opened beneath his massive throat and exposing the white bandages across his chest, his bare head thrown back, his eyes aflame. He appeared to fill the doorway with his great bulk, as he stood there with arms folded across his great breast and his pillarlike legs widely planted.

With an incredible rapidity and confusion the scene changed. I was aware that with a single swift movement Barseek brought from beneath his denim parka a pistol and fired even before I could spring forward to check him. And so quickly afterward that the reverberations sounded almost as one there was another shot. Barseek at that moment had my gaze, and he lunged forward and fell so close to my feet that one of his outthrown hands rested on my moccasin, where it twitched and clawed as if to the last he sought to pull me down. Shocked by the unexpected I leaped back and turned around.

The shaman stood in the doorway, as if planted there, but his arms were no longer folded. One hand held close to his hip clutched my revolver, and a faint wreath of dissipating blue smoke told its tale. A white splinter of torn wood in the weather-beaten frame of the door alongside his head proved how narrow had been his escape. In the momentary paralysis of awe that inevitably succeeds that of unexpected tragedy there was something horrifying and terrible in his sudden loud rumble of laughter.

"Barseek whose life I saved in sentimental folly," he called out, "seems to be but carrion! He has gone to his fathers. Are—are there others who wish to cut the thongs of life? Come. Be not slow to speak. The sled dogs that carry the souls of the dead to the beyond are harnessed—waiting! Surely those hunters who seek the chase in the land of the spirit steppes could ask no better opportunity than this! I, Peluk, stand here ready and waiting to unlock one or many doors. You hesitate? Or have you decided it best to remain here a while longer and endure the life you have so comfortably led?"

He moved painfully out until he reached the veranda post and clung to it as if for support. He lifted the hand holding the pistol and gestured with it, and men shrank back as it was directed toward them.

"Your heads are those of children," he said. "You know nothing of that outside world or the men who dwell therein. In the wolf pack is always one which leads. When the caribou herd beats a deep white trail there is one which always breaks the way. When the white geese fly there is but one that heads the wide-flung wedge that cleaves the sky. There is never more than one to show the way. If that one be right those who follow survive. If that one be wrong they perish."

Standing there on the edge of the elevated veranda he looked down upon their upturned faces and, with a single contemptuous movement threw the pistol out into their midst.

"If I am wrong," he said as the tiny swirl of those who had eluded the missile closed in again, "then it is yours to say so and to slay. If I am no longer worthy to lead then let me have a speedy end. Death is very quick and but a pang. Life is but a struggle over a long, obscure trail. We sweep constantly falling snows away in the hope of finding beneath them older and guiding sled tracks to guide us on our way. Sometimes we succeed. Sometimes we fail. And so, if you think I have failed to guide you well, I submit myself unresisting. I am well tired of the need of killing others that the things which I believe good for them may survive!"

Before we could assist or prevent him he staggered weakly downward into their midst with outstretched arms, weaving to and fro as if he could no longer see. Stumbling across a corpse of his own slaying, helpless, unarmed, he cast himself into their hands.

They, like us, stood spellbound by his barbaric magnificence, his gallant disregard of results. And then they, as we, surged forward to support him. Our animosities, our partisanships, our fears and hopes, were all swept aside. Our hundred hands stretched out, pityingly, to lift him from the snow upon which he had pitched inert in his last and heroic effort. Our hundred feet, some of which had never before crossed the threshold of the austere house, pattered and slipped and crowded as we carried him and laid him upon the bed from which, fighting to the last, he had arisen. From the confusion I caught one bitter cry in my own tongue, and recognized Jack's voice.

"By God! They've killed him as surely as if they had shot!"

I don't know who forced them out or how they went. But I do know that it was I who, breathless, stood with my back against the door that had closed upon them, and saw Jack panting by my side, and the running figure of Malitka. We followed her to where the shaman had been laid. Already she had pulled open his shirt and was twisting broken bandages back into position. Some of their borders were stained with vivid red. A curious silence fell.

Malitka bent above him and, heedless of his blood, pressed an ear to his brawny chest. He lay very quiet, very still. I suffered a great fear that he was dead until Malitka lifted her head, motioned to us and fell to chafing his listless hands and feet. We worked with her and did not cease our efforts when she began removing the bandages from over his most serious wound.

"He has lost enough blood in the last few days to kill an ordinary man," she said. "But his heart beats feebly."

It was not until Malitka had done all she could and we had trickled stimulants down the shaman's throat that we thought of anything other than the invisible but threatening shadow of death that seemed watching our puny efforts.

"Great heavens! Do you suppose he anticipated what effect throwing that pistol and then himself into their midst was going to have on that mob of Indians?" Jack asked in an awed voice.

"Of course," I answered. "Moreover I'm positive that he thought that this was his last chance to save us. He may even have thought that if they killed him they would be satisfied—for a time at least."

"He must have known that his wounds were opened again," Malitka said, "and that it was suicidal to make that final exertion. I'm afraid it was his last."

I stood there at the foot of his bed for a long time alone, a little later, looking down upon him watchful for a change and thinking of his rough greatness, of his prodigious sense of the dramatic, of his gift for swaying the minds of his own people and of his inexorable and terrifying ruthlessness when aroused. Surely the spirit of some ancient conqueror and leader of men, some unchristianized Charlemagne or less ferocious Tamerlane had returned after ages to dwell again for a brief span in this extraordinary man. I could not help thinking of what this man might have become under more fortunate conditions of breeding and opportunity. Studying him more closely than I had ever done before I could see but little of the Indian in his cranial formation or features. Save for his complexion and the color of his eyes he could have passed readily enough for a full-blooded Russian of the great rugged De Witte type. I have often wondered since who and what his father was. Unanswerable questions these. But—I wonder!

It was two hours later when Jack came tiptoeing into the room and relieved my watch. He whispered to me "Is there any change?"

"No," I said. "He has not moved but seems breathing more strongly. Malitka's instructions were that he was not to be disturbed for the purpose of giving more of the stimulant. If he wakens he is to have more but not otherwise. I can't tell whether he's asleep or unconscious."

When I reached the living room Malitka was not there. I walked across to the window and looked down upon the village. Its streets were untenanted, peaceful, the smoke was still spiraling straight upward from its chimneys and it was difficult to believe that so short a time before it had been murderously seething. No visible evidence of the latter phase was left save the solidly trampled and beaten snow in front of the Great House.

Suddenly the door of one of the larger houses opened and more than a dozen men appeared and tramped stolidly away toward the east. A dull flash of metal showed that the foremost carried an ax and then flash after flash disclosed that each of the pedestrians was similarly equipped. The village cemetery lay out there to the eastward. I had often loitered there scanning the strange scaffoldings upon each of which rested the remains of the dead, surrounded by their weapons of chase or war and equipment for the trail into the shadowy beyond. I was puzzled by the fact that so many men went to prepare but one resting place in the borders of a forest so profuse, where the few requisite timbers were so easily accessible. Could it be possible that they were going to prepare resting places for us? The thought was not soothing. I went to the hallway and took therefrom all the rifles, brought them into the living room and was carefully cleaning, oiling and loading them when Malitka

unexpectedly returned. She smiled sadly as she saw what I was doing.

"No, my friend," she said as she divested herself of fur parka and cap and bent over to unlace her out-of-door moccasins; "weapons will not be needed. The rebellion is over. And yet I wish—I wish—it could have ended otherwise. When I reached the council house it was too late. A pity! Horrible!"

"What has happened?" I demanded, resting a rifle that I had been oiling across my knee.

She picked up the discarded parka and cap and stood with them across her arm close beside the door as she answered, "The rebellion is ended." She stood still for a moment more, moved to the door and out into the hall and I heard her sigh as she hung her garments upon the antlers that served as a hall rack. When she returned she said, "Wait here a moment. I must first see the shaman," and again was gone.

"There is one ray of light in all our gloom," she remarked when she reëntered the room, closed the door, and stood beside the center table. "The shaman is not unconscious but asleep. What a marvelous vitality! Sleep has more virtues than ever the master of your English tongue, Shakespeare, could express. It cures where all else fails. It's a ministration of a greater physician than the sorry world has ever produced—God's healing. I have hopes, now, that Peluk will survive."

She appeared to have forgotten in this new satisfaction my eagerness to learn of the morning's events, and then recalled them.

"Oh! About—other things," she said as she sought and found a chair, "after we had done all we could for the shaman, I decided that the best thing I could do would be to go into the village and talk to the natives and try to bring them back to reason. I can't blame myself for the delay because Peluk demanded first attention, but—I am sorry I could not have been there sooner. It was a great pity! One cannot teach these natives deliberation. They act so swiftly, so impetuously, so surely."

She stared out of the window for a moment with troubled eyes and then again at me. For the first time I saw in her the hurt child, the shocked woman.

"After they had helped us carry the shaman in they picked up the body of Barseek and went to the Council House. There they heard all that Barseek's followers had to say in self-defense. One of his men admitted that Barseek was behind all—everything—that has gone wrong. He was a savage. Nothing more! It was Barseek who inflamed against you and Peluk the ones who followed you out on the trail—which of course was why Peluk turned back with you so suddenly to escape them. And then, with native craftiness, it was Barseek who, in the gold camp, insisted upon your and Peluk's death. Evidently some of his followers distrusted him, for when he wished to be elected chief, they chose a man of their own. The shaman killed that man—back up there in the gold camp. Barseek made one more effort when he had some of his men follow you after you escaped. You know how that ended.

"Then he made his last attempt. And you know how that, too, ended—in Barseek's death. The natives tried the dead man and his two principal supporters. And they——" she twisted her fingers together, and looked sorrowfully away, then concluded in a hushed voice—"condemned those two followers, fell upon them with knives and killed them there in the Council House. They were there, dead upon the earthen floor, when I arrived. I was too late. But I told them all that was in mind! They listened. I think some of them were sorry. I think that possibly I said harsher words to them than I might have used under less stress. But that is neither here nor there. At once they pledged themselves to future obedience to Peluk and to me. They named a burial party. And—I came away! That was all. But I cannot forget the three dead men on the floor."

She sat with drooping head and moist eyes; I cannot admit that I joined in her sympathy or her mourning. I suppose that she looked upon them all as foster children of hers, whom she must protect and elevate from a state of savagery or barbarism to something more worthy. Candidly, I was glad that they were dead and beyond power to inflict death or injury upon us or others. I foresaw victory for us.

CHAPTER XVIII.

There are many memories of those long-gone days standing out clear and distinct; of the time when the shaman first spoke; of the time when he was first able to leave his bed and the day when, leaning heavily

on my arm, he was first conducted to a chair in the living room. And there, for many days, he would sit, quiet, brooding, sometimes silent for long intervals in which his eyes regarded Malitka with warmth and Jack with appraisement. He seemed absorbed in consideration of the possibilities of their future. Once when both were absent he said to me in his rolling Russian, "Your friend is a fine young man; but neither he nor any other could possibly be worthy of the Lady Malitka."

"Nonsense," I replied. "You question him because you have never liked him."

"Never so much as you, Old Grayhead," he answered noncommittally. And then he abruptly changed the subject by saying, "Tell me more of thy life, friend—what thou hast done and what wouldst do in the future."

He seemed to take an almost boyish delight in anything I might tell him, forever insistent on drawing me out and insatiably curious regarding my career. He asked me questions concerning myself, my ancestry, my family, my private affairs that in any other would have been intolerably impertinent. And, on the other hand, I could get but little from him concerning himself, save when, now and then, almost as if by accident, he let something slip concerning his wanderings or the dog's life he had led in Russia. Once I touched him on the raw and learned more of the Russian side of his ancestry than at all other times put together. It was when I questioned him how certain peculiar scars had been inflicted on his forehead and cheeks. I thought for an instant, when I saw a scowl of anger flash over his face, that I had asked one question too many, but after a slight hesitation he gave me a reply.

"When first I went to Moscow," he said, glowering at the floor, "I had in my pocket a letter found in my father's effects. It was from his brother whose name was—no matter!—and written years before. I cared nothing for this uncle of mine, but sought news of my father. I went to a palace where they drove me away. I waited outside for many days. It was in winter. I got my reward. One night a magnificent troika came slowly through the great gates, the grooms clinging to the horses' heads on the sides to restrain them, and seated inside was a man who I recognized, from his resemblance to my father, must be he whom I had so long sought.

"I sprang forward with a foot on a runner of the troika and appealed to him. He fell back at first as if terrified, then bent forward, stared in my face, and cried to the driver, 'Throw this vermin off!' The driver lashed me over the head with his thonged whip, but I clung there, braving the blows and screaming my appeal to this uncle of mine until, blinded by blood, I loosened my hold and fell to the snow. The last thing I heard was a man's laughter. I was violently bitter then, but later I, too, laughed. I hadn't until then understood the gulf that divides the legitimate ones of a noble house from its bastard spawn—spawn rendered all the more unadmissible if it happens to be from a careless marriage with one of the lowest origin. If I had not at that time been so wildly intent on finding the father whom I loved, and who, considering the tolerant if amused pains he took to teach me reading, writing—many things—must have loved me in his way, I should have endured other patient vigils outside those palace gates until I could cut my uncle's throat."

He laughed as if at a reminiscence and, although I tried many times thereafter to lead him into further confessions, he was too adroit to ever gratify my inquisitiveness.

One day when all of us thought him quietly resting in his bed of convalescence, he disappeared. When he did not respond to the luncheon summons, I went to his room to find it empty. Within it was not a tiny single possession of his, nor so much as an indication that he had ever occupied it. It was neatly in order. He had taken the trouble with infinite attention to details, somewhat clumsily executed, to restore the room to an unoccupied condition. After we had eaten our lunch I insisted on being the agent of inquiry.

I found him, as I anticipated, in his own home. He sat there in the window where I had so often seen him with his carving tools engrossed in the creation of another button! Not a light, not a shadow, appeared different than on many days when I had invaded his seclusion.

"You're a good one, Peluk!" I exclaimed in its Russian equivalent, and not without some indignation. "What is the meaning of this desertion? Have any of us done any-

thing to offend you? Why leave the Great House without a word of parting or of thanks?"

He threw his tools and chunk of ivory upon the window sill and came, almost impulsively, and with outstretched hands to meet me.

"I hadn't thought you would regard it in this way," he said. "Me? I am of no moment! To be succored in distress, to survive scratches, and then to pass away from an unearned hospitality seemed fitting. Besides"—he stopped, attempted to turn his inconsequence into a joke and chuckled—"I need one button more and it must be made!"

"Damn your button!" I exclaimed in annoyance. "What about Malitka? What about Jack? What about me? Isn't there something due us?"

I suppose there must have been something of personal hurt betrayed by my voice, for with a swift change from badinage to gravity he advanced and laid both hands on my shoulders and stared at me with warmth in his eyes.

"How could I tell you and those other two that I had decided to leave?" he demanded. "Partings are so unpleasant! And—I knew that you, Grayhead, would seek me wherever I went. I am happy in that knowledge. We understand each other, you and I. And so—you can agree that my way was best."

"Well," I said, relenting, "you might have whispered to me at least if not to the others, that you were coming back here. You might have known that I should be worried until I found you again."

He laughed, gave me a loving thrust with one of his quick hands, and then, as if embarrassed by his own impetuous familiarity, turned away and sought a chair.

"You can find me here after this," he said. "This, such as it is, is my place. And," he added almost shyly, "yours! Anything that I am or own is yours—Grayhead!"

And then with the abrupt change that characterized him, he became intensely serious, once again the planner, the masterful. Of the two personalities that dwelt within him the most dominant resumed its sway.

"I am again physically strong. Snows do not last. Traveling in summertime in this country, as you know, is impossible. You must finish your work. The Lady Malitka and your comrade wish to return to the outside. To-day, and perhaps for a little time longer, I hold the natives of my tribe in my hand. To-morrow or in a few days—I do not know."

His coupling of himself with the Indians of his mother's race did not escape me. He did so without apology, pride, or shame, as if it were an accepted allotment.

"The Lady Malitka, assisted by the man who was her husband but never by nature a mate," he went on, "has done much for my people and for me. It is not fair or fitting that she should pass from here without a kopeck, leaving millions of rubles behind in gold. I shall see to that while I have the power. Although this is a land where gold has small worth, it is of inordinate value in the places where you go. You and I know that, Grayhead, for you and I have learned."

I started to protest but he silenced me with an upraised hand.

"You, yourself, I cannot see go without anything that I could give. And so for that, too, I will provide."

He arose from his chair and walked to the window and stared out for a time, as if either measuring the climate, the weather, the seasons, or wishing to avoid my regard when uttering a decision.

"Day after to-morrow you and the others must be prepared for the trails. Day after to-morrow you start outward. I promise that you shall depart in safety. And——"

Still looking away from me, not meeting my eyes, speaking across his shoulders, not turning head or body, he uttered a fatalistic Russian word, *"Nitchevo!"* "It doesn't matter." And he added, "Go now. Tell them. I can say no more! Day after to-morrow at seven o'clock of the morning you start. Outward bound!"

I rose to my feet and waited for him to say something more. In a way I was nettled by his peremptoriness.

"All right," I declared. "If that is the way you are going to handle our affairs there's nothing more for me to say." I waited a moment longer, hoping that he would at least meet me halfway in my wish to be friendly, but he stood immovable. "I'll see to it that they are ready, if you will send the sleds up to be packed."

"I'll send the sleds," he said, still without turning from the window.

And, resolved not to make further con-

ciliatory speech I turned, walked out, and banged the door behind me.

When I broke the news to Malitka and Jack in the Great House, they appeared relieved, jubilant. They left me alone that afternoon, and I learned afterward that he accompanied her up to the edge of the forest where he waited while she paid a last visit to the grave of the man for whom she had conceived a lasting affection if not natural love. It didn't strike me for a long time that she must have suffered somewhat in that hour when she paid reverence to a friendly memory and at the same time farewell to a dead, a turbulent past. It must have been the cleavage line. The kindly but trying hour when old mistakes were sponged from the records of life and the new and unmarked slates were grasped by her hands.

God knows there are but few of us who do not sorrow for the old, dead things, and seek hope in the new.

In the starlit morning of the allotted day we bade farewell to the Great House. A half dozen dog teams strained and yelped, eager for the adventure of the trail. Silent, heavy, aloof, the shaman stood outside waiting for us to declare our readiness. Malitka came last, as if she had wished to be alone in the rooms wherein so many years of her life had found security. They were not denuded. The priceless skins of the white polar bear, of red fox, of caribou, were left upon the floors. The fire in the huge fireplace crackled and glowed. The spreading moose antlers were still nailed in the hall. Some of her garments were still hanging thereon. The bookshelves that Harris Barnes had made with his hands, his and her books thereon, stood as they had been created in the corner of the living room.

Malitka did not come forth alone. My comrade returned to hasten her when time drew on and brought her out and seated her on a sled. He arranged the fur wrappings around her for her comfort. She seemed unaware of his solicitude, for her head was bent and her body quivering with sobs. The shaman stepped up to the veranda, muttered some words of command to the weeping native servants, thrust them back with his hands, and pulled the doors shut.

"Go ahead!" he cried in the guttural native language. "We can't stop here forever. Go on!"

The men by the dog teams leaped aside. One cracked a whip. The released leaders sprang into the collars with resounding yelps. The sleds broke loose from the clinging snow and came to motion. In a long procession we ran down the village street. Our running feet beside or behind the sleds stirred our blood.

At the entrance to the defile, bordered by the white gates, I looked backward. There lay the village, the solemn, forest-clad hills behind, the white peaks dimly upreared against the stars of the morning sky and, last view of all, the somber shape of the Great House, with its windows alight with morning lamps, but obscured as if by parting tears.

A crowd of natives ran with us until the shaman ordered them back. The sleds streamed through the natural gateway and swerved in an abrupt turn. The entire familiar view was cut off and, so far as sight was involved, we might have been thousands of miles from a human habitation.

CHAPTER XIX.

With such perfect sled dogs, skilled runners, and complete equipment, our journey outward was made with surprising ease. I have not much knowledge of the route beyond its general direction; but I am certain that it was chosen by the shaman so that we might avoid the sparse native villages. For from the time we started until we reached the seacoast we never encountered a human being. I do not recall more than one confidential warning uttered by Peluk in that smooth succession of days.

"Explain to your friend if he does not understand Russian," he said on the first night's camp, "that he must guard his tongue. Some of these with us understand as much English as I, and—might overhear. I have told them that the Lady Malitka returns again after a time. It was necessary to lie to them! It was a lie, I know, for she returns no more!"

Our evenings were usually passed in Malitka's tent that was rendered almost luxurious through the shaman's forethought and care. It was but rarely that we could induce him to join us, and then he sat, cross-legged, in the most remote corner he could find, saying little, smoking much, and thoughtful. Not even I could arouse him to his former friendliness. It was as if he had erected a barrier between him and us.

We finally came within sight of the cold arctic seas. We dropped down across unbroken snows to a village and a trading post. The trader, a half-breed Russian, old and fat, welcomed us, and Peluk spoke to him in Russian and called him aside. A moment later they returned together, with the information that the trading company's steam schooner was more than twenty days overdue on its annual voyage. It was satisfying news. We took possession of such accommodation as could be put at our disposal, and prepared to wait in patient resignation; but luck favored us in that at noon the next day a bellowing siren apprised us of the steamer's approach.

"Stim-bo-oat! Stim-bo-oat!" the natives shouted in great excitement while dogs of the camp, and ours that had held proudly aloof for once, joined in long-drawn wails. The quiet native village awoke as if from an annual sleep when the master's boat came ashore, and the first white man we had seen for many months rolled upward from the beach and entered the trader's doors. A whaleboat landed with its huge pile of stores, its rowers cursing the surf that compelled them to come in stern first. Natives swarmed to the long, inhospitable beach to seize and carry to the trading post the precious bales, boxes, and bundles. The trader, in a frenzy of excitement and importance, waddled to Peluk, and said, "This is the end of her voyage this way. Her captain is willing to take your people back, but they cannot land until they are in Seattle."

I think that up to then he had not been aware that I used his tongue, for he seemed surprised when I said, "That is satisfactory to us."

"It will take two hours to put our trade of furs and pelts aboard," he said; "and after that we will send yours. Is that all right?"

"It is all right," I said, and he hastened away.

I gave the news to Malitka and my comrade. They were standing together on the beach staring at the steamer.

There was some hitch in the trader's arrangements after the first boatload of pelts had been put aboard, and the captain of the schooner approached us, gave us each friendly greeting, then said, "These traders always lose their heads in times like this. We might get your outfit aboard while he is getting his next lot ready."

I turned and shouted to the shaman who was standing in the midst of his men quietly talking, and whatever lack of discipline was shown by the trader's men there was nothing wanting in his. He uttered short commands, and his men sprang to the sleds and began crossing the narrow strip of beach to the waiting boat. Each, although carrying burdens of small compass, trudged heavily with heels biting deeply into the sand.

"What—what's this? What are those men carrying?" the captain shouted.

"They carry gold," Peluk answered as imperturbably as if giving the news that their burdens were merely sand. Not only the master of the schooner and his men, but Malitka, Jack, and I were astounded. I remembered now that he had declared his intent to provide us with some funds; also that throughout our journey to the coast I had speculated on why Peluk required such a retinue of dogs and men. Now it was explained. He was enriching us!

We stood speechless in the midst of a great excitement while the boat sank lower into the water and the skipper himself, anxious for its safety, and troubled by such an unexpected responsibility, demanded that one of us accompany it aboard and remain to guard it and to receive the remainder. Jack walked to Peluk and extended his hand. They talked quietly, and Jack was the only one of the two to show any emotion. The boat pulled out with him, passed alongside the black hull of the schooner to the leeward side and was lost to view.

"You, Lady Malitka," said the shaman, "must go with the next boatload. To you I have written a letter voicing many words my tongue cannot speak; for in it goes my heart."

Tears suddenly filled her eyes and she cried, "Peluk! Dear Peluk!" and would have said more had he not given her hand a harsh grip, and then, as if he could not speak, bent suddenly over and kissed it. He turned brusquely away, calling over his shoulder, "Grayhead, after you have put the lady in the boat return to me. To you I have not written but would talk."

I stood there trying, somewhat awkwardly, to comfort Malitka, and when at last her sobs had ceased and we looked around the shaman was nowhere to be seen. The boat with its excited men was backing for its run up the surf, with some of its rowers standing in readiness to plunge into the icy

water and seize and force her stern up on the sand. The last of the gold and our few personal belongings were speedily loaded. I picked Malitka up and carried her to the stern to spare her feet from the running surf, and again the boat left for the ship.

"How long can I have now?" I shouted to the captain.

"At least an hour and a half before we can get the last of the trade aboard," he called in reply.

I looked for Peluk. He was standing well behind his men, with his hands in his pockets, giving them orders. Now and then they glared at the villagers, some of whom were staring at them when not bestowing attention on the ship or the string of carriers who were coming from the warehouse behind the dunes, bending under great bales of pelts and furs.

"You are to go back there to the edge of that timber and make camp," he told his men. "You are to speak to no one, not even the trader. You are to answer no questions. You are to wait until I have bought the trade we are going to take back with us and send for you to bring it. Be ready, for to-night we must be far from here. I have spoken."

Obediently they turned and straightened out the dog teams and without so much as a glance at me ran lightly away toward the fringe of timber a mile or two distant. For a moment the shaman watched them, and then turned toward me and beckoned. I followed him as he trudged away, wondering whither he was taking me. There was a cliff a little farther along that bleak and desolate shore against whose base the surf, comparatively light as it was for those waters, hurled itself in uprearing waves that broke and fell in a smother of foam. A gradual ascent led to the cliff's summit that stood at least two hundred feet sheer above the sea. As I plodded after Peluk I wondered why he was taking me to such a spot for our final conversation. Once I asked him, but he did not reply nor so much as hesitate, but climbed upward, his great legs moving as steadily as the pistons of an engine, his hands still in his pockets, his head bent forward.

Somewhat out of breath myself, I finally came abreast of him as he stood on the top and looked around—first in the direction of the timber line as if to assure himself that his men were obeying his commands, then at the little village as if to make certain that his men had not been followed, then out at the schooner. My eyes followed his, took it all in at a glance. I saw the string of Peluk's natives, dog teams and sleds, running lightly, looking now like strings of soldier ants crossing a barren field of unbroken white, and noted the cluster of barrabaras huddled about the log-trading post as if for protection, and the schooner that was to carry us away. From that height she appeared absurdly small, frail, inadequate, and the slow plume of smoke from her funnel made a black smirch ill befitting the cleanliness of the pure atmosphere. It was as if she intruded on something that belonged to God alone. The far-distant horizon where sea and sky faded into union did not at that moment hold for me any glamour. I knew what lay beyond. It is inevitable that nothing other than the unknown can bring visions or sway our hopes.

"Grayhead, thou dost dream! I brought thee here to talk," said the shaman in Russian.

I can't tell now why I turned to him and gave way to impulse. But I'm candid enough to confess what I said.

"Peluk, why be such a fool? Why stay here in this land? Why not come with us? Why not with me? I've lost my partner. I shall be alone. Think of the places neither of us have ever been—places we could seek —adventures big enough to satisfy!"

The stolidity of his face broke as does sunburst through clouds of storm. There was something of an incredulous happiness in his giving way.

"I want you!" I added. "We understand each other now, you and I. Come! Let's go together."

He came forward and put both hands on my shoulders, and his fingers gripped hard. His dark eyes widened and probed and were warm with a great light as he stared at me.

"Thou art brother of mine!" he cried in that big resonant voice that I had heard in so many crucial times. Then his lips moved and he tried to speak and could not, clutched me a little harder, and at last, as if incapable of other action, released and thrust me staggering away with a single movement. I did not resent. I knew that he could do nothing else. I appreciated his mental maelstrom. He turned to a wind-swept ledge of granite near by and sat thereon—as if like had sought like and, finding it, was thereafter safe.

We forgot the ship far below, the village, everything. We were engrossed in ourselves and an issue.

"No," he said at last, "I'd like to go. It tempts me, Grayhead, because we should be together, in quest of many and strange adventures; finding some; failing in many; perhaps victoriously satisfied in a few. But —you don't understand! You can't! You haven't suffered as I have. Because yours, Grayhead, is a just mind and open heart, you forget wounds that might come to one such as I am—out there!"

He swept his hand aimlessly over the waiting sea, in indication of the thousands of leagues beyond.

"Come! Think of it! Look at these!" he exclaimed, sweeping the fur cap from his head and lifting his face toward me as if courting scrutiny of his scars. "These," he said, touching them with his fingers, "are ineradicable marks of the esteem in which such as I are held by those with whom you must hereafter associate. My father's brother put them there. Isn't that enough?"

I could not find words to temper such great injustice. I sat dumb and without answer, indignant and impotent.

"But we needn't go to Russia," I said, grasping at an evasion. "There are other places on earth. You sent gold to the ship. Some of it, I presume, is for me. But Peluk, you and I can take that and outside we can——"

"Nichevo!" he interrupted me with his Russian word of fatalism. "Don't speak nonsense!" He stopped so long that I lifted my eyes to look at him and saw that he was staring at the snow between his feet.

"The Lady Malitka is gone forever," he said. "The partner you had is gone with her forever. And that is well and as it should be. The inevitable. So, why not come back with me, brother? There is more gold in the hills—more than any man might wish; but to me that is nothing. What I must do is to care for my people——"

"Your mother's! Not your father's! Not all yours!" I exclaimed.

"True," he admitted. "But I am not for the stronger side. It can protect itself. The weaker cannot. No, ridiculous as it may seem, I'm for that weaker and more helpless side. Moscow taught me what it is to suffer, to endure, to hope, to seek justice. I'd like to go with you—Grayhead, but—I can't! I can't!"

He got to his feet and strode backward and forward in front of me, beating a path in the snow, never looking at me, with bared hands behind his back, heedless of the winter's chill, and spoke as if thrashing out a prodigious problem alone.

"I can truthfully say that in all my life I have loved but two men—my father and you! I have liked some—hated many—and loved but two, my father and yourself."

He stood for a time stern, aloof, and then with a swift gesture faced me with appeal. He stretched out his hands, as if to spread life before me.

"Come back with me, Grayhead! Come back! The others desert us. Let them go. They will be happy and secure. Neither of us need worry about their future content. Perhaps in a few years' time, when I can have found a man of my mother's race strong enough and wise enough to justly rule and protect his people, you and I will then go outside together. We could go as men of very great wealth. Be sure of that."

He stared at me awaiting my answer, but I slowly shook my head.

"Ah, I forgot that you are not as so many men of your race for whom gold is a god!" he said. "It means but little to you. You are a wanderer who would be free. No, you are right to go. When the wings of the great migratory birds are clipped they die with broken hearts. Also I am selfish, for the day may come when those others, so much younger, will lean upon your wisdom—will need your advice. You also have duties that must be fulfilled. But know this!"

He had halted in front of me and now stood looking at me with eyes in which was unabashedly, gladly shown, a great affection.

"Know this!" he repeated as if to impress it upon my memory. "Even the stanchest, most gallant ship must some day run from the blasts of the tempest and seek port of refuge. If that sad day comes upon thee, brother—which may all my gods forbid!—seek thou me! In that hour all I have to share or to give, even to my life if it serve, is thine! Go now! And—farewell!"

Before I could move, so unexpected was his action, he threw both his great arms about me, fervently clasped me in the fashion of Russian brothers upon parting, and then, as if overcome by emotion, turned his back and waved me away, climbing

slowly upward to a still higher point of rock as if he would be alone.

"Peluk, is this good-by?" I called after him, and without stopping his march he gestured affirmation.

"Will you not write to me?" I cried. "Will you not wait until I can give you an address?" And then when he did not answer I added, "Then I shall leave it with the trader. Will you not write some time?"

He paused, as if considering, and then without looking back replied, "Perhaps, brother of my heart! Perhaps!" and then more hurriedly moved away.

A blast from the steamer's siren, impatient, insistent, warned me that I must hasten. I plunged down the hill and in a few minutes climbed into the waiting boat. It thrust out in the froth of foam and my eyes sought the cliff. I was disappointed that from that position its peak could not be seen. When I climbed to the deck of the schooner both Jack and Malitka were waiting for me. They asked a question or two that I could not answer, while the small boat came swinging up from sea to davits. The steamer's parting bellow roared out drowning all sounds, her screw seized the water as if impatient to be off, her bow swung to the south-southeast, and with Jack and Malitka following me I walked to the stern rail.

"There he stands," I cried, pointing to the great cliff on whose very top stood a lone and unmistakable figure rendered sharply visible against the sky above and the snow beneath. His very size seemed magnified and exaggerated into gigantic proportions there against the sky line, like some barbaric Colossus of the North. He stood there for a long time with folded arms, not responding to the waving of our caps and Malitka's handkerchief in farewell. He must have been watching us, for at last he raised both hands high above his head, clutched them together, and then threw them widely apart with a gesture of whose significance I have never been certain. I have never been able to decide whether it was of resignation or despair or whether, having resolutely chosen his path, he was brushing away as hopelessly futile all grief for our memories. We could not evoke from him another sign, and at last ceased our efforts.

My companions had each other for diversion, with great dreams of happiness, splendid hopes for the future. Time has but made those dreams come true. But then they seemed to me fantastic. They paced back and forth across the open space of the after deck that was for the time being deserted, she with an arm confidingly in his, and he gravely bending his head toward her as if to lose no inflection of a loved voice. For some time they seemed to have forgotten my presence as I stood there resting both elbows on the rail, not losing sight of the diminishing cliff.

I was somewhat disturbed by Jack's voice when he halted behind me and he called, "I say, old man! Did I tell you that the shaman's letter to Malitka says that, inasmuch as he knows that she is already amply provided for by government bonds deposited in a Seattle savings vault, all the gold aboard this ship is yours? Do you know you are now worth about a quarter of a million dollars?"

"No," I replied, "you didn't tell me," and went on thinking.

"Humph! You don't seem particularly elated over it. That's just like you!"

"Yes, just like me," I agreed.

"What's the use!" I heard him exclaim in disgust. "He's always been a grumpy, surly, unimaginative old cuss. Come on, Malitka, let's go forward and see if they've got this ship headed right for some place where there's sunshine and warmth and——"

He must have lowered his voice to whisper the remainder of his speech, for I heard her soft, happy laughter.

"By the way, Jim, look after those binoculars I left lying there on a grating—they're the skipper's!" he called back.

I looked around. With Malitka he had disappeared behind the corner of a deck house. I aroused myself to seize the glasses and focus them to my sight. I turned them backward across the constantly widening sweep of chill waters that intervened between the ship and her last anchorage. I caught the dimming outline of the landmark —the high cliff upon which the shaman and I had made our farewells. They were good, powerful glasses.

They brought, leaping to my view, the figure of one whom I esteem as a very great man. But now, it appeared, as if shorn of strengthened power, for the time being, at least, despondent, conquered, with his back turned to us, the shaman was on his knees beside a gray rock and his head was pillowed upon his outflung arms.

Classics in Slang

Jazzed by H. C. Witwer

Author of "Phil Grimm's Progress," "Confidence," Etc.

McTague is getting so educated that every time he passes a college professor on the street he feels like "pluckin' off his glasses and hollerin' 'Blah!' at him"

VI.—THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

To the Sporting's Editor of the *Daily Shriek*.

FRIEND EDITOR: Well, editor, I suppose you have saw in the papers where I was fine twenty-five fish and likewise placed underneath the holy bonds of keepin' the piece, on the charge of simple assault with a touch of battery. Editor, the capitalistic press, which in reviewin' my bouts has a hobby of callin' me a preliminary boloney and a menace to boxin', claims that the victim was "Beansy" Mahanoy, my formerly manager. In the contrary, editor, *I* was the victim, whilst Beansy was merely the guy I beat up.

As they is two sides to every story, editor, I will give you my two sides now and anyways, as Lloyd George says to the Sinn Feiners, it's all fun. In the case you don't remember me, why I am the promisin' young heavyweight which was left a bookstore by Angus McTague, nee my uncle, when he departed from New York to take up the exactin' duties of a angel—or let us hope such is the case, hey, editor? Well, I need a bookstore the same way I need another neck so I beat it right up from New Orleans with the ideas of sellin' the store and usin' the jack to get the bridge of my nose and the seat of my fightin' trunks heavily reënforced, as the wear and tear on them two points is somethin' terrible!

Well, editor, it's been years since anybody was as surprised as I was when I get to my bookstore. They is a member of a prominent sex in charge of it which wouldst of made Cleopatra bite her nails and Webster himself wouldst of used up sixty-four dollars' worth of lead pencils tryin' to describe her. It turns out that she is no less than Ethel Kingsley, my buried relative's clerk, and she is takin' care of the store till the missin' heir, to the viz, *me*, shows up.

Editor, the first glance I took at Ethel Kingsley knocked my heart for a row of bathhouses and the second glance showed me what a dumbell I wouldst be to tell a high-class jane of her caliber that I am "One Punch" McTague, a leather pusher, and her new boss. So with uncannily cleverness, editor, I says I am merely a *pal* of Uncle Anguses missin' nephew and my name is Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim. By the way, there's a handle which wouldst make a Pullman car take arsenic, hey, editor?

Well, editor, from the start, me and Ethel gets along like a slice of tomato and a piece of lettuce and Ethel stays on at the bookstore, in the spite of the fact that it's doin' about the same volume of business as a celluloid collar salesman wouldst do in Hades. She promised Uncle Angus just before he fin'ly learned not to breathe through his mouth that she wouldst run the joint til his nephew showed up and then again she is crazy to meet the boy, as I have filled her up with stories about him til she thinks he's a combination of Jack Dempsey, Douglas Fairbanks, Babe Ruth and Napoleon. I have made up my mind, editor, that I will not confess that I am the nephew til I have got her to the altar and heard her mutter the muffled "I do!"

In the mean's while, editor, Ethel is givin' me a college education by the via of books out of my own bookstore. Every night I take home one of the classicals and make a well-feigned attempt at readin' it and then I have got to write out my idea of it and bring it to her in the mornin'. In that way I am gettin' so educated, editor, that every time I pass a college professor on the street why I feel like pluckin' off his glasses and hollerin' "Blah!" at him, just to be nasty.

How the so ever, as Admiral Farragut says, editor, the course of true love is no speedway. A man can't go on lyin' forever and not get in nc jam!

I have told Ethel I am in the "glove business," which is true, as in the bulk of my battles, editor, it seems to me it does nothin' but rain gloves. But naturally enough, they is times when I come into the bookstore with let us say a ear out of tune or a weird-lookin' eye, or maybe two or three puffed lips. These things, of course, makes my "glove-business" story seem out of order. I look like I have just made a insultin' crack to a buzz saw when I meet Ethel after "Homocide Mike" O'Leary has smacked me for a trip by usin' the foulest tactics ever saw in a ring since they let Dave come in with a slingshot against Goliath. Ethel recognizes just a soupcon of my face, but that is enough for her to identify me and put her off of me. So there we have the situations when this postal card opens, editor.

Well, editor, after I have sent either thirty or seventy-two letters to Ethel and they all come back with "opened by mistake" in her handwritin' marked on the envelopes, why my nerves is in such shape that if as much as a dynamite bomb exploded in my room I wouldst jump a full inch. Beansy Mahanoy is fit for a lunatic asylum likewise, because he has match me with "28-Round" Murphy, heavyweight champion of Mount Everest, and in the heartbroken state I am in, editor, I couldn't punch my way out of a paper bag. Editor, 28-Round Murphy's real name is Launcelot Fishbaun and he is no cake-eater, but one tough boy—a pig for punishment and a spendthrift at handin' it out. But, editor, it is a hobby of mine to give them gluttons for chastisement acute indigestion once I get 'em in a ring and I figure I will knock this guy for a row of Portuguese flower pots without no trouble, if Ethel will only give me another chance. Alas, ah me and alack-a-day, love is tough, hey, editor?

I have gone to a osteopath and got my pan retreaded after the holocaust with Homocide Mike O'Leary, editor, and by this time it is healed and I am commencin' to look like a human bein' once again. So takin' the bull by the forelock, I went over to my bookstore with the objects of makin' up with Ethel or else quaffin' off a pint of drug-store gin and endin' it all.

Editor, for a change they is a customer in the store and he is lookin' for some good books on the care of hen's teeth, but Ethel talks him into buyin' a novel by George Bernard Shaw. This Georgie Shaw is a English sport writer, editor, which says Dempsey didn't have one chance in fifty of takin' leetle George Carpenter. This baby also tipped Abel, Goliath, Bombardier Wells, Joe Beckett and fin'ly Carpenter as sure winners and how he gets past with that stuff is beyond *me*. In my humbly opinion, editor, Georgie Shaw couldn't pick a rose out of a bed of cabbages!

Well, editor, as usual the customer tries his hand at makin' a date with Ethel and as usual he gets the raspberry. It is a odd thing, editor, but it seems that no member of the male's sex between the ages of eighteen and eighty can go into my bookstore without makin' a game attempt to take Ethel to lunch. How the so ever, editor, if you couldst gaze upon this laudanum drinker's vision, why even *you* wouldst understand *that* part of it. Without a pinch of exaggeration, editor, Ethel wouldst cause a marble statue to gnaw its lip!

Ethel looks up when my huge but shapely form darkens the threshold, editor, and when she sees who is it why she turns away and commences dustin' the cobwebs off the cash register. Nevers the less, she wasn't quick enough to prevent me from seein' the maidenly blush which covers her maddenin' face til it looks like a four-alarm fire and makes me dizzy for the moment. But by the time I have reeled to the counter, editor, she has recovered her presence of mind and the glance she presents unto me wouldst of froze Niagara Falls solid in two seconds flat.

"Good mornin'," I says, darin'ly castin' aside the conventions.

"How is the *glove business* coming along?" she remarks sarcastically, without givin' me no definite answer on the weather.

"Elegant," I says. "I'm takin' on more hands every day!"

They is quite the clever joke concealed there, editor, ha, ha, hey?

Well, instead of gettin' a hearty guffaw from Ethel, editor, I get another chilly look and just then a goofy-lookin' bozo comes in and wants to know have we got anything new by Sir Walter Scott.

"Have you read the 'Lady of the Lake?' " says Ethel.

"Why I thought Annette Kellermann wrote that one," says this guy and at a nod from Ethel I give him the air.

Well, editor, that little incident cracked up the ice and before Ethel can stop herself she is grinnin' back at me like as of yore and I am sittin' pretty again. Right then and there, editor, I got a rush of brains to the head and I made up my mind that I wouldst tell this sweet mamma that I am a leather pusher and be done with it! Sooner or later she wouldst find that out anyways, prob'ly from seein' my picture in the papers as heavyweight champ which I will be in another decade. And then again, tellin' the truth never killed nobody. Look what it done for George Washington, hey, editor? So drapin' myself gracefully over the counter, I says in a soft and low voice:

"Ethel, I got a surprise for you. I am not in the glove business, at least I am not in it the way you think I am. As the matter of fact, I am a well and favorably known prize fighter!"

Editor, her eyes widens til they are as big as a owl's and her little mouth opens til you couldst of throwed a baseball through it without hittin' a tooth.

"Oh-h-h!" she kind of gasps. "A—a—a *prize fighter*—and you never told me!" Then she looks right into my honest blue eyes, one of which is temporarily black. "Why?" she says.

"Well," I says, hangin' my head like I am in the third grade, "I did not think a beautiful good-looker like you which is educated to boot wouldst care for any part of a pug, Ethel, so——"

"Nonsense!" she butts in, "I think boxing is a clean, healthy, manly sport. Why how thrilling this is becoming! Are—are you Jack Dempsey?"

Now, editor, here is where the demon Temptation grabs me by the throat and it is on the tip of my tongue to answer in the pro-affirmative. Think of Ethel lookin' on me as the world's champion, gettin' three hundred thousand berries a fight and the etc.! Why all I got to do is to say "Yes, I am Dempsey!" and she will fall right into my arms, hey, editor? But when I see that sweet little trustin' face turned up to me, editor, why I ain't got the heart to lie no more and besides, the first time she sees me fight she wouldst know immediately that I was in no ways connected with the Dempsey family. So with a sigh, editor, I passed up what some wouldst call the chance of a lifetime.

"No, Ethel," I says, "I am not Dempsey—I am—eh——"

Editor, here I am at my wit's end once again. If I tell her I am One Punch McTague she will know I am the missin' heir to the bookstore and the time for that is far from ripe yet, editor. One shock a day is enough to give her, the way I look at it. So I took a deep breath and plunged on, "I am—eh—I am Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim, like I said and——"

"Isn't that rather an odd name for a boxer?" asks Ethel, the height of innocence.

"Well, I'm rather a odd fighter," I says, gettin' out of a tight corner with my usually ease. "As the matter of fact, my full ring name is Battlin' Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim, but whilst I am in the ring they call me Stupid for short."

"Oh—I see," says Ethel, coughin' a bit. "When do you box again? I—I'd love to see a boxing match."

"Say—on the level, would you?" I hollers, wildly excited, editor. "Well, I'm goin' up against a set-up entitled 28-Round Murphy in a week. I'll get you a box seat. Just think of sittin' there, Ethel, and seein' me knock this boloney for a row of Siamese bathtubs! Why——"

"Well—I—all right, I will!" she smiles. "But I warn you, if the match gets too brutal I'll leave."

"So will I!" I says, and they was much more truth than poetry in that remark, editor. I don't believe in needless bloodshed in the ring, especially with the regards to my own.

So we got that all settled.

Well, editor, we talk about this and even about that and then Ethel gives me a book called "The Merchant of Venice," one of the latest novels from the busy pen of Billie Shakespeare. You may remember, editor, that this is the guy which recently caused a commotion with "Romeo & Juliet." Anyways, I promised I wouldst take "The Merchant of Venice" home and read it and afterwards write my idea of it for her, editor, and then we closed up the store, takin' a walk through the park for dessert. What we talked about then, editor, is not nobody's business!

The night of my memorial battle with 28-Round Murphy—and others—me and a taxicab called for Ethel and got her safely settled in a seat close to the ringside. I never felt better in my life as I climbed

through the ropes a short while later and waved to her in a nonchalantly manner, whilst the illiterate mob is still cheerin' 28-Round Murphy, heavyweight champion of Mount Everest. Ethel gimme back a little frightened flicker of her handkerchief, editor, and the next minute the bell rung and the entertainment has begun.

This big tramp comes leapin' and jumpin' out of his corner, editor, like he was goin' to assassinate not only me, but everybody in the clubhouse! The mob lets out a roar when he clips me on the head with a wild right and then misses the referee by inches with his left. Well, I seen at the glance, editor, that the only chance I had with this two-fisted maniac was to step right in and slug with him, because you could no more box him off than you could stand on a railroad track and box off a train.

So when 28-Round Murphy is short with two more terribly rights and crashes into the ropes, I kind of sidle up to him. He rebounds off the ropes, lets forth a beller with his head lowered like a bull and comes chargin' at me. Editor, the panic-stricken referee scurries for cover with a longin' look down to where the reporters is hysterical and then I murdered the already cuckoo customers by crashin' my world-famous right to the point of 28-Round Murphy's jaw. He give a little shiver, editor, and then dove gracefully to the floor as cold as sixty-two dollars' worth of ice, less than two minutes after the quarrel started!

I'm good, hey, editor?

Well, editor, my handlers is gettin' off my gloves and I am noddin' and smilin' to Ethel which is noddin' and smilin' back and I am naturally as happy and carefree as a man wouldst be after knockin' the heavyweight champion of Mount Everest stiff with a single punch. Suddenly I noticed that the fans has quit cheerin' my noble victory and is now yellin' for a extry bout, on the grounds that they have paid to see violence and bloodshed and not no pushover like 28-Round Murphy turned out to be. They begin whistlin' and stampin' on the floor and fin'ly the announcer holds up his hands for silence. When it was so quiet you couldst of heard the Woolworth Buildin' fall over, editor, why the announcer makes a statement which causes the crowd to let loose a war whoop and which almost causes *me* to fall through the ropes—which as the matter of fact, editor, I did, a short while later.

"Ladies, gents, and you birds in the gallery," says the announcer, "havin' stopped 28-Round Murphy in less than a round, One Punch McTague which always gives the best they is in him, has consented to take on "Fightin' Barney" Flynn, heavyweight champion of the United States navy, in a six-round star exhibition in the same ring. I thank you!"

Well, editor, I just sit there in a daze whilst the mob is tearin' the roof off and when a new referee walks over and says for me to snap into it, why I come to life with a crash. Can you imagine them expectin' me to take on two tough men in the same night, editor, and not even askin' me what is *my* wishes in the matter? And Fightin' Barney Flynn, *heavyweight champion of the U. S. navy!* Woof! I grabbed hold of Beansy Mahanoy, which up to that point was my so-called manager and which is just climbin' through the ropes.

"What the—what's the big idea, you cuckoo?" I hollers, tryin' to make him hear me over the noise of the fans. "D'ye think I'm goin' to fight a world's series here tonight?"

"Shut up!" he says, "and don't be a pest. You ain't had even a workout yet and this second boloney is even worse than the first. If this guy is champion of the navy, then I'm a Brazilian duke! And look at the advertisin' we'll get. One Punch McTague stops two men in one night! What will your girl say when she sees the papers full of that?"

Well, editor, this was different and I commenced to think how delighted Ethel wouldst be when she seen me smack down them two rough-and-tough babies one after the other.

I stopped the two men in one night all right, editor, only not the way Beansy figured.

Whilst we are waitin' for Fightin' Barney Flynn to bound over the ropes, I waved over at Ethel again, editor, and though she looked like she wasn't quite sure what it was all about, why she smiled and waved back. The next second a fresh yell goes up from the customers as my second victim comes down the aisle and clambers into the ring.

Oh, what a gorilla he *was*, editor! He looked highly capable of knockin' the Rock of Gibraltar silly and before he got done attendin' to me I was positive he couldst do it with one hand. I bet when Abel seen the

burly Cain climb through the ropes he felt the same way I did right then, editor! The next thing the referee calls us to the center of the ring for instructions and this Fightin' Barney Flynn, which ain't even give me as much as a pleasant smile since he come into the ring, turns to the referee and says:

"Do I walk to my corner and wait for the count every time I knock this dumbell down, or do I have to stand over the body?"

A tough baby, hey, editor?

Then the bell rings.

With a last wave of my shapely hand towards Ethel, editor, I turned to face Fightin' Barney Flynn and the next thing I know I am tryin' to force my nose out of the canvas where I have buried it to the hilt in fallin'. I open one eye and I am layin' in the middle of the ring in the now deserted clubhouse. Not only is Ethel gone, but so's everybody else outside of Beansy Mahanoy and the watchman. The only light lit is the one over the ring and the rest of the place is as dark as a Etheyopium's cheek. I am still in ring togs and for all I know I have been out for six months. The watchman bends over me, editor, and takes a squint.

"He just flicked a muscle," he says to Beansy. "Drag him out on the sidewalk, so's I can lock up. Sweet papa, what a clout that was which laid him low! You ought to have more brains than to send him in against two men in the same ring. Why——"

"This here boloney couldn't stop two men in the same ring with a machine gun!" butts in Beansy, with a sneer. "His broad was out in front to see him get rapped for a row of stewpans, too—that's what makes *me* laugh!"

Editor, in one leap I am on my feet.

"See can you get a laugh out of *this*, you big, double-crossin' stiff!" I yells and I stuck a roundhouse right in his pan.

Well, editor, by the time I got all through for the evenin' with Beansy Mahanoy, a young medical student couldst of got more experience fixin' him up than he couldst get hangin' around a hospital for six years. So that's how come I get pinched and placed under the holy bonds of keepin' the piece, editor, and as the matter of fact, I didn't do so bad that night at that. I started against three men, knocked two of 'em dead and vice versa with the other, givin' me a net percentage of around .750. You can't laugh that off, hey?

Speakin' of managers like Beansy Mahanoy, editor, here is "The Merchant of Venice" which I am goin' to bring to Ethel and see if I can't square myself with her once again. This here's the story of a manager which was even worse than Beansy, if that's possible!

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

By

W. Shakespeare and One Punch McTague.

Francis Xavier Shylock was a wily old pilot of box fighters with a few drops of Jewish blood in him, which lived at sweet old Venice, the traffic cop's paradise, in the year of 1600. Shylock had a lot of good boys in his stable and had made the bulk of his jack by collectin' forfeits from the guys they fought, when said guys tried to come in a bit over the weight limit. He wouldn't give 'em as much as a ounce leeway. For the example, let us try and imagine that one of his lightweights was matched with some other boloney and the weights agreed upon was 133, ringside. Well, Shylock made the other guy put up a thousand-buck guarantee that he wouldst make the weight and if he stepped on the scales at 133 1-16 why Shylock wouldst grab down the thousand-buck forfeit with a sarcastical grin. In that way he come to be knew far and wide as "Pound-Of-Flesh" Shylock.

When it come to money, this baby was closer than a dead heat and he had about as many friends in Venice as De Valera has in Buckin'ham Palace, but they was one bird which hated him so wildly that alongside of *his* feelin's for Shylock why it looked like the rest of the burg was madly in love with him. This was no less than "Battlin'" Antonio, a young leather pusher which was commencin' to make a name for himself as a two-fisted idiot. He looked like a cinch for the lightweight title, then held by a big cheese named "Knock-out" Dropps, which was managed by Shylock. Battlin' Antonio was positive that if he ever got Knock-out Dropps into a ring he wouldst knock him for a goal, but Shylock took his battler around through the sticks crackin' the pushovers and turned two deaf ears to Antonio's pleas for a match. How the so ever, the newspapers took the matter up and fin'ly Battlin' Antonio is matched with Shylock's meal ticket for the lightweight championship of Venice.

Whilst Battlin' Antonio is trainin' for

the big quarrel, his buddie, a guy entitled Bassanio, comes to him and says they is a rich jane out in Seattle which is cuckoo over him and he has decided to lead her to the altar and then knock off work for the rest of his life. In the order to make the trip first cabin and doll himself up so's this damsel's old man won't run him off the porch when he gets out there, says Bassanio, he has got to have three thousand ducats.

Now Antonio didn't have three thousand ducats or three thousand dudogs either, but he is guaranteed six thousand ducats for his brawl with Shylock's champ and as he is the kind of guy which will do anything for a pal, why he goes to Shylock and asks him for the dough, sayin' he will pay it back with his share of the purse for the fight with Knock-out Dropps. Shylock thinks matters over for a minute and he sees a chance to send his old enemy, Battlin' Antonio, to the cleaner's. If his scheme goes through, why he will not only get twice the jack he loans Battlin' Antonio, but he will also prevent that bird from ever pullin' on another glove. So he grins and says to the waitin' Antonio:

"Sure, I'll let you take the three thousand ducats and you won't have to pay me no interest at all. Let's put it this way, you let my champ come in weighin' 135 and you make 130 for him and then all you got to pay me back is the three thousand I'll lend you. *But we'll make out a set of articles to read that if you are a ounce over 130, ringside, I can cut off the extry weight with a knife before you climb through the ropes!*"

"That's K. O. with me," says the goofy Antonio, "I can make 130 lbs. or I can go in weighin' four ounces and still knock your cheese champ for a trip!"

With that he signs the agreement and gives the three thousand ducats to his pal.

Well, Bassanio beats it to Seattle and starts right in makin' love to Portia, the rich jane which was wild over him, and Antonio resumes heavy trainin' for Knock-out Dropps as he has got to take off a lot of weight on the account of makin' that dumbell agreement with Shylock. But takin' off weight with some people is like preventin' Niagara Falls from bein' composed of water and such was the case with poor little Battlin' Antonio. He cut his meals down to three drops of skim milk a day, he moved to a Turkish bath, he got up every mornin' and run 75 miles before breakfast, but the day of the fight with Knock-out Dropps he tips the beam at 131—one fatal pound over the limit set by Shylock. This guy now comes forward and demands that he be allowed to cut off of Battlin' Antonio the extry pound of flesh like it says in the agreement. The judges in them days was terrible strict and although they shook their heads sadly and says they wished they couldst do somethin', why they give Shylock permission to go ahead and cut off the pound of beef from the tremblin' Antonio.

But in the mean's while, Antonio has sent a hot wire to his buddie, Bassanio, tellin' him all about the jam he is in. Bassanio is now sittin' pretty with the rich and well-to-do Portia, so he puts it up to her. He tells her his pal Battlin' Antonio is about to get a slice cut off his body on their account, because if it hadn't been for Antonio lendin' Bassanio the three thousand ducats, why he couldst never of kidded her old man into thinkin' he meant somethin'. Portia is what you call a miracle. She is not only a wonderful looker, but she likewise has brains! She grabs hold of Bassanio and they rush to where Battlin' Antonio is bein' made ready for the grinnin' Shylock to cut off the pound of flesh he is overweight.

"One moment, you old fathead!" says Portia, in a rich contralto voice. "The articles of agreement is that you're entitled to a pound of flesh, that's true, but they is nothin' in there about any *blood* bein' due unto you. If you can slice that boy's body without drawin' the blood, you win—but if you can do *that*, then you can also turn the Pacific ocean into Bevo with one wave of your hand!"

With a baffle moan of rage, Shylock sidled out through the crowd which cheered Portia, Bassanio, Battlin' Antonio and the Stars and Stripes with a right good will and the etc. Antonio then climbs into the ring and knocks Knock-out Dropps for a silo, thus winnin' the lightweight title. Portia and Bassanio got wed right after the fight, but Antonio didn't.

The boy was gettin' more sensible all the time.

Respectably yours,
One Punch McTague.

"The Count of Monte Cristo" cuts into McTague's business hours in the next number.

Spunyarn

By George Hugh Banning

Tom Whittly, author, had made a lot happen to the hero of his sea story, but it was nothing to what the aforesaid hero did to him. Not that Tom hadn't been anxious to ship on the *Aggie Newmiller*, anyway—and before the mast, too. Only—well, when he took the name of his own hero he started a deep-sea romance which needed *some* finishing. There was old Captain Newmiller, there was Donivan Stevens, there was Roberta—in short, there was trouble galore. Incidentally, Banning, a newcomer to our pages, *knows* the sea.

(*A Four-Part Story—Part I.*)

CHAPTER I.

TOM, ALIAS DICK.

A LIFE with its future established is like the water of a stream that has been shunted through an aqueduct. It flows faster and smoother perhaps, but forgets the joy of dancing over rocks and shifting pebbles, forgets the thrills of the plunging falls, whirling pools and the unknown jogs and twists that lured it on laughing to the sea.

That's why some young men leave home.

That's why Thomas Whittly, Jr., was a stranger in St. Helens, and that's why a certain tobacco dealer frowned over his morning paper and blew a thin cloud of smoke from the high side of his cocked mouth as the newcomer twisted toward him through the crowd.

Whittly was a wiry, dark-haired youth, moderately tall and with clean-cut, open features. He wore a pair of dungarees with bits of white thread outlining the discarded price mark, and a clean, unfaded hickory shirt. As he stood before the cigar stand he felt strangely out of keeping with himself—out of keeping with the world. Twice he had reached to straighten his tie only to remember that he wore none. He had forgotten to buy a new belt. The engraved silver buckle of his old one was a give-away. All this the tobacco clerk seemed to take in at a glance. His eyes moved up and down in rapid survey and there was a semblance of a sneer playing upon his thin lips.

"Good morning," greeted Whittly frowning absently at a hodge-podge of cigar boxes on the shelf. He was conscious of no reply and when he looked again the clerk was serving another customer.

"Well, wha-d'-you say, Ben-Tenny? Little snooze, eh?"

The addressed was a frail Australian. Whittly had noticed him in the restaurant shortly before. His thin, blond hair, long and oily, hung like rope fibers from his hat and clung, like yellow stucco, to his dark forehead. His pale eyes remained fixed on a doughnut he had carried away as he spat and dexterously tucked a quid of Norwegian snuff under his lower lip to make room for food. He tossed a coin over the glass counter and looked up with a grin.

"Fawncy I'll be stockin' up on yeh shortly, Peck. That bein' unless them bloomin' fresh-water sylors don't make no more mistykes."

"Good! I'll fix you up cheaper'n any man in town. When d'you think you'll sail?"

"Th' ol' man claims two weeks. But it's two months, I sye. Think of it, Peck. Yesterdye them land swabs stepped the jigger and spanker sticks and bly'me, if the jigger riggin' worn't on the spanker m'st and the spanker riggin' on the jigger m'st. That means reseizin' sixteen shrouds and eight backstays. Bly'me, matey, it's a bloomin' shame. It ain't sylorin'. *Farmin'*, I calls it."

"Farmin' is right," laughed Peck as the little cockney picked up a small round tin and shuffled off down the street.

"Well, sir, what's on *your* mind?" said the

clerk turning to his new customer. "Somethin' in cigars, eh?"

Whittly nodded and named the brand.

"Them's two-fers," protested the tobacco dealer.

Whittly nodded again, and again felt himself the object of deep scrutiny. Evidently paying twenty-five cents for two cigars was not being done in sailor villages of Oregon. But the favored brand was produced and Whittly, withdrawing a pigskin pocketbook, tossed a twenty-dollar bill over the cash register. Peck glared at it. In his usual state he might have demanded smaller money, but under the circumstances he took it as a challenge and was quick to produce the proper change.

"Workin' at the yard?" he asked.

"I hope to get a job this morning on the new motor ship."

"Ship on 'er you mean?"

"Yes. When she sails."

"Just arrived, eh?"

"Yesterday."

"From Portland?"

"No. Tell me, what time does the launch leave for the yards?" asked Whittly although he had been well informed at Riverview Inn the evening before.

"Seven-forty-five," replied Peck, glancing at the clock. "It's just about that now."

Whittly thanked him and followed a shabby crowd down the street. A small ferry was waiting when he reached the dock and five more minutes found him gliding smoothly across the Columbia River with his coworkers.

The shadowy banks with their bordering foliage and a freshness peculiar to large bodies of water overwhelmed him with a realization of beauty and recalled the times when he and Archie had spent vacations together on numerous yachting adventures.

The broad expanse of muddy river water that slapped at the sides and bubbled aft he pictured as the blue, clear ocean of the channel islands. The splintery decks, worn by the constant shuffling of calked boots, became smooth spruce as white as sugar, and the marred lead-painted woodwork turned to shining teak. He could almost feel the presence of Lois Barthway by his side, and through the steady *chug-chugging* of the oil-spluttering motor came the dulcet strumming of a guitar and the sound of her sweet though still undeveloped singing.

He recalled her last words to him when she had said: "Why don't you do something, Tom?—just anything!" To which he had replied: "You flatter me, Lois. Do you really think me capable?"

Whittly's inherited income, small as it was, had generally afforded him a living within the limits of his environment and habits, though the habits—bad ones perhaps—had often caused him to overstep.

He excused his indiscretion, however, because of certain literary aspirations known only to himself and a very intimate few. For the past two years he had devoted much of his time to a long sea yarn—one he had named "Dick Farrier; or, The Testament of the Sea." Because of its marine nature and his desire for experience in things nautical, he had bought a fair-sized schooner yacht, *La Paloma,* the initial price and upkeep of which had so maimed his principal that he had been obliged to sell at a loss.

But the entire transaction had kindled his passion for adventure and dried the source of his income to the extent that the old way of living grew to be as impossible as it was monotonous and insipid. His love for books, the art of their creation, and all that tended to magnify this capacity, became more and more real, until one morning as he perspired beneath the bedclothes and reached for a pitcher of ice water to wash the fur lining from the roof of his mouth, an idea which had been simmering for months began to boil until it burst into a sudden decision. Two gulps of water and he sprang from the bed into a cold shower, exclaiming half aloud: "To hell with it all! I'm through!"

And now all that had once been real became remembrance and all that had once been vague intention became real. He had stepped from the old life to the new, leaving behind, among other things, his own name.

Thomas Whittly, Jr., was the namesake of his late father who had been an outstanding figure in the shipping world and well known in all ports of the Pacific coast and Hawaii. Because of this and in lieu of possible newspaper captions, such as "Sea Lures Scion of Late Sugar King" and all accompanying exploitations Whittly, the younger, decided upon an alias.

So now, emerging as if from a dream, he blew a cloud of smoke into the air and watched it vanish with the vaporous past until a vigorous jar and a sudden listing of the launch as she pulled into the shipyard

dock brought his attention for the first time to his present surroundings.

There was a shuffling of feet. Men crowded the gangway. The more agile sprang from the rail and mingled with their fellows on the half-swamped float. There they relighted their pipes and loitered about in newly stimulated conversations.

"Where can I find the captain?" Whittly asked when he reached the landing.

"Who? The old man?" replied one. "See that big guy with a roll of papers—the one talkin' to the lime-o under the shear legs? That's yer man."

Whittly ascending the second gangway perceived that the lime-o was none other than Ben-Tenny, the Australian. "The old man" seemed out of sorts. He punctuated his reproof with quick nods and gestures. His cold eyes gleamed obdurately as he stormed on. He was past middle age, with an air of responsibility and erudition. His dark face, clean shaven but subtle, seemed to have undergone a peculiar petrifaction so that a smile or any other human expression might have crumpled it to certain destruction. The skin bore indelible furrows radiating from the corners of his fishlike eyes and hung heavily down, like two half-stuffed meal sacks, about the corners of his mouth and chin. When the lime-o took his leave the skipper turned sharply upon Whittly with:

"Well, what do *you* want?"

"Are you the captain of the *Aggie Newmiller?*"

"Captain Newmiller is my name," replied the skipper, laying particular stress upon the "Newmiller" as if the sound of it were enough to terrify the wildest seaman that ever cut a throat.

"And Dick Farrier is mine," returned Whittly.

Dick Farrier, Whittly knew, was a great man. A man who, in the face of overwhelming odds, had quelled a mutiny on the high seas and subjugated the brawn of others by the timely application of his own "indomitable will." Dick Farrier was a hero—a hero whom Whittly had immodestly identified with himself—the author and creator. And this fictional hero, through three wags of his maker's tongue, sprang from the heights of romance and imposed his incarnation upon the unsuspecting skipper with:

"Glad to know you, captain."

The old man accepted the extended hand with marked reluctance.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked again.

"I want a job, first of all, as rigger on your new vessel. But what I want most is to ship on her to Port Pirie when she sails."

"Things don't go by 'I wants' on this globe, lad;" said the skipper with a grin that listed till it capsized. "And another thing: if you *do* ship you'll prefix the word *sir* now and then in your conversations with me. Understand?" His eyes flared up and dimmed again like lighthouse warnings. "Well, what are you good for?"

There came a pause.

"You're good for nothing!" His voice was like a foghorn. "And you might as well say and have done! If you're no better than the average that comes around here job hunting, you don't know a hitch from a bowlin'. You're useless. *Understand?"*

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir! What do you understand? You don't understand anything, that's what. You can't understand and you can't do a blooming thing. And you can't do me either—if I am what I am! And if you think for a minute I'm not I'll jolly well show you. Never saw anything like it in all my life—dropping things! losing things! breaking things!—no skilled labor, no tools, no brains! Nawthing at all!" There came another pause and then: "But I'll take nawthing from you but *obedience* and *respect;* and ver-rie dam' little of that! Understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied the other, suppressing a smile.

"Oh, you do, do you? Hm-mm. You're learning faster than the majority. Lay over to the rigging loft. Tell the mate I sent you, and don't get so hot-headed at the way I talk to my men. That's *discipline.* Something modern seamen know nawthing about. But they'll learn—every hand of 'em! *That's* what!"

"Yes, sir," came the subdued reply and the newly incarnated "Dick Farrier" hurried off surprised at having been accepted on his first enterprise.

Upon finding the mate he was careful to use a *sir* between every other phrase, although the latter appeared to be only twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old—three or four years older than Farrier himself. His features were surprisingly like those of the

skipper though greatly modified by youth and still susceptible to expressions—quite pleasant expressions at times.

"Been to sea, have you?" he asked after certain exordiums.

"Yes. Oh, that is, I've spent some time on yachts."

"Yachts! What do you mean? Sampans, canoes or what?"

"No, sir," replied the other. "The particular vessel I speak of, sir, is a sixty-foot schooner yacht, *La Paloma,* belonging to—she belonged to Tom Whittly."

"Tom Whittly!" exclaimed the mate. "Seems to me I've heard of him. *Sure* I have! I've heard the old man tell about a Tom Whittly. He's dead now, I believe."

"Dead? Maybe—maybe he is. That is, I hadn't heard."

"Sure he is! Been dead three or four years. Owned a plantation on Oahu and a big line of freighters running between San Francisco and the Orient."

"Oh! You're thinking of the father. The one I worked for was Tom Whittly, Jr."

Farrier's expression did not escape the mate. Instinctively his hand rose to cover the belt buckle, for on it were engraved the initials, "T. W."

"Yeh-eh," drawled the mate scrutinizing the new hand suspiciously. "You don't expect to ship aboard the *Aggie,* do you?"

"Why not?" Farrier protested.

"The sea's no place for you. A sailor is born not made. Once you start the life it sticks to you—sticks like death. You can't get away from it. You're as good as dead."

"One has to make a living, you know," was the reply.

The mate stared at him. Farrier felt himself standing naked before an X ray—naked save for a belt and a silver buckle. But suddenly the tension was released.

"Here!" said the mate with a quick shrug; "let's turn to. We've got to get these pen'ants and jackstays tarred. Lots to do if the old man expects to sail in two weeks. I'll start you on a man's job to-morrow, ratlin' down, if you do good work now with the tar. There's the pot. Fly at it."

Finding a flat stick Farrier dipped it into the black Stockholm tar and applied it to a well-wrapped splice while the mate busied himself with the serving mallet.

"What in the devil are you doing there?" cried the mate suddenly. "Is that the way Whittly taught you to tar rigging?"

The new hand stood mortified, staring vacantly at his new boss with the dripping tar stick still in his hand. The mate laid down the mallet with an impatient smirk and dropped a large square paw into the black fluid.

"Here!" he said; "that's how you do it! Get the idea?" He rubbed both hands together until they were saturated, grasped the pendant at the splice and applied the gummy substance to the serving. "Get the idea?" he repeated. *"Here!* Shake on it!" He extended a hand nearly shapeless so thick was the molasseslike solution.

They shook heartily. Here was a man Farrier wanted to make his friend.

He turned again to his tar pot and the seemingly endless number of tangled pendants and shrouds. Occasionally spectators would stop at the door to watch with interest the mate's revolving mallet swinging round and round the huge wire, neatly serving the oily parceling with smooth and shiny amberline. Then they would glance down and smile at the tar-spattered individual with him.

Farrier was interrupted by the sound of a gruff voice and the familiar phrase: "Never saw anything like it!" At the door stood Captain Newmiller and beside him was a young girl. The mate turned from his work to greet them as Farrier hastened to remove the tangled obstruction of twisted cables.

"Working hard, Ross?" asked the girl.

Farrier could not suppress a smile. She seemed to be a creature from his own world—one who could handle a teacup as well as a tennis racket or an interesting conversation. The fresh overlay of blue covering her youthful form reminded him of the frock Lois Barthway had worn on a certain yachting excursion when she had taken the helm of *La Paloma* and held on in a stiff squall until the lee shrouds were draped with kelp.

Poor Farrier! He forgot that his face was splashed with tar, that his hands were saturated with it and that his hair straggled like sticky oakum upon his forehead. With his eyes fixed upon the girl he fancied himself in starched ducks assisting her from the skiff to the smooth, white deck of his yacht. He half expected her to greet him as she did the mate. But, stepping into the loft, she drew the folds of her skirt tightly about her and picked her way through the tarry obstacles as daintily as a kitten avoiding pud-

dles of water after a rain. She glanced at Farrier, but it was no more than a glance.

"Working hard!" echoed the mate. "You know me better than that, Bobbie."

"Yes," growled the skipper, "and so do I. Now looka here, Ross. I want you to get those blacksmiths to take their feet out of the sand and turn out that dolphin striker. Tell them we've got to *have* it so's you can set up the jib stays. You're going too slow with everything. What in blazes do you think you're doing around here? I can't see——"

The last sentence was not finished. He had tripped upon a wire and planted his free foot in the tar pot, completely upsetting it upon the snowy shoes of the girl.

"Father!" she exclaimed.

"Father be blowed! What's all this gear doing all over the deck?"

The skipper with a wild kick sent the pail flying to the opposite end of the loft.

"A fine mess of land swabs you've got anchored about here! What's that black tar baby for with his slimy eyes on me. Fall off, you! Never saw the beat of it!"

He stormed out of the shed sputtering like a leaky steam valve.

"The old man been at the main brace, has he, Roberta?" asked the mate with a grin.

The girl smiled sadly, adding a slight shrug and followed the skipper from the loft.

"Is that Miss Newmiller?" asked Farrier.

'My sister," Ross answered. "She's anxious as I am to get to sea after all this dallying around on that misfit. But this'll make the kid's first trip since she was knee-high to a sandpiper. She's away at school most of the time. Hand me that coil of spunyarn."

During the rest of the forenoon Farrier found the mate quite congenial and learned, among other things, that the only chance of shipping aboard the *Aggie Newmiller* rested with the skipper, the mate's father. "The old man" took particular pride in his new vessel, it was explained, and her crew was to be chosen by none other than himself.

Farrier spent the noon hour aboard the *Aggie*. For a wooden vessel she was a huge affair. She was a thing of interest to all contemporary ship designers because of her nondescript qualities. To the layman she was without doubt a "windjammer," but had he seen her alongside the taut, old type topmast schooner he might have remarked that the *Aggie Newmiller* was lacking in grace, that her five masts were stumpy and short and that her general lines differed offensively from those of the former. In fact she was obviously a sailing vessel because she had sails, and she was no less a motor schooner, for she had motors. She was less of one because she had the other and less of the other because she had the one. The *Aggie* was an experiment and Captain Newmiller was the butt of it. At least these were the remarks that Farrier heard at every turn.

He went aft to the poop and looked forward while his spirit soared far out to sea. The drab sheds of the shipyard dropped away and the great pulsing ocean frothed and leaped at the sides. He could feel the deck heaving and groaning beneath his feet and the cool spray against his cheeks. Astoria to Port Pirie, Australia—this was to be the maiden voyage of the *Aggie Newmiller*, and a great longing tightened upon his heart.

CHAPTER II.

"THE TESTAMENT OF THE SEA."

It may be true, as Washington said, "Better to be in solitude than in bad company." But it is equally true that one who takes this too much to heart may very aptly find himself in both.

From Dick Farrier's point of view at least this doctrine was happily applied. After three weeks he could grin with the worst, smile with the best and drink straight "bootleg" with them all. He had learned the language of his fellows and, though they sometimes failed to understand his, they liked his company and his accommodating habit of buying "two-fers." The name, "Tarry Dick," attached itself and became as indelible as the tar which had gradually penetrated his finger nails, staining them to a rusty brown.

Day after day he could be seen aloft with a tar pot strapped to his belt, a marlinespike in his hand and a huge bundle of ratlines and lanyards dangling from the rigging beside him some fifty or sixty feet from the deck of the *Aggie Newmiller*.

There were times when the skipper came aboard with his daughter. Farrier watched them from aloft, hoping that they would recognize him. Perhaps the skipper would decide that he needed an extra hand and

that he, Tarry Dick, would be chosen. But the days passed on and there came no encouragement.

Ross Newmiller, the mate, who was strangely attracted by certain subtleties in Farrier, had done his utmost. He had invited him from time to time to dine with the family, but upon each occasion the old man was as distant as during working hours.

Captain Newmiller, Farrier learned, was by no means of ordinary deep-water stock. He was from an old colonial family of Australia but, having been left an orphan when very young, he had found new ties a burden and had run away. Destiny had led him through a vista of more than thirty years of wind and water to where we find him now: head of a self-respecting family and with controlling interest in a five-masted schooner. Not counting the latter his daughter, Roberta, held the place closest to his heart. He had given her an education and now he expected her to follow him to the ends of the earth which she, in turn, having a youthful longing for adventure, agreed to do.

During Farrier's visits to the cottage Miss Newmiller's conversation was always terse and apathetic. She held up her end with "yes" and "no" or an occasional "really," all of which added to Farrier's feeling of unwelcome.

But this was not all. There was another in the household: Aggie herself, the proud wife of Charles the ferocious. It was through her that Tarry Dick's conjectures became confirmed. Full realization came one evening as he sat puffing a smoke screen between himself and Miss Newmiller. Ross, in the room adjoining, seemed to be holding war council with his mother, for the sound of Mrs. Newmiller's voice was indicative of squall.

Suddenly it burst. "Ordinary dust of the shipyard," "Tar dauber," "Common hobo," and all the names possibly compatible with feminine decency, vibrated from the panels of the closed door with such bald intensity that even Roberta blushed and attempted to muffle it with a rapid flow of persiflage.

By this time Farrier, in his humiliation, was prepared for anything and when the old man announced that only the most experienced seafaring men could hope to ship aboard the *Aggie,* Farrier was not surprised and was glad to make his final exit from the cottage.

On nearly all of his intrusions—if such he must regard them—he had met one other besides members of the family—one he had seen several times aboard the *Aggie* in company with Miss Newmiller. He was a heavy-set man of about thirty-five, with a great red mustache bristling in sharp contrast to the celluloid complexion of his scalp. It always appeared to Farrier that he had just haberdashed out of a tog shop with full equipment. He wore cloth-top button shoes and upon the little finger of his right hand was a diamond ring.

This glittering specimen was Donivan Stevens, the second mate to be. At present he was taking advantage of free time for the courting of Roberta, but all her efforts to discourage him resulted only in his readornment. He would try another brand of odoriferous hair tonic or have his remaining scalp fibers parted in a new manner: "amidship," for example, or "list to starboard," "full and by," "down by the head," and all the variations known to water-front whisker mechanics. But his scanty capital grew less and less, so that when the riggers were "laid off" to make room for the regular crew Donivan Stevens was glad to accept the position offered him.

This happened after the fourth week when the *Aggie* warped out into the streamway and under auxiliary power went puffing slowly up the Columbia River, bound for the Portland oil docks.

Farrier watched her as she rounded the bend. Then he turned away, back to his room, trying to swallow obstinate assertions of injustice and discouragement. There was yet a week before the *Aggie* would sail. She would have to return to St. Helens for her cargo of mining timber. Perhaps his chance would come then. If not he would have to find another vessel.

His novel now became his sole occupation. He employed four typists for three days on the final draft. On the fourth day the job was done—everything but a certain involved will and testament—one indispensable to the plot of the story. For the necessary data pertaining to the legal technicalities he had sent to Portland for a law book. It reached him on the day of the *Aggie's* return and at six o'clock that evening the mock legacy was completed and Dick Farrier—the Dick Farrier of fiction—became the legal heir to a vast estate.

Alias Dick Farrier, the author, breathed

a sigh of relief. Laying the completed will upon the table he covered his typewriter and left the room with visions of clam chowder and a T-bone steak perforating what was left of his meal ticket.

Perhaps it was the same sweet vision that visited Ross Newmiller when he "knocked off" for the day, for it was in his mind to have dinner with Tarry Dick and tell him about the *Aggie's* trial trip. So he stopped at Riverview Inn, climbed the dusty stairway and knocked at Dick's door. There came no reply. Finding it unlocked he entered to make sure his friend was not asleep. But the bed was empty and sagging. His attention was caught, however, by the huge law book upon the table. He started to examine it, but was diverted in his purpose by the will.

The casual gaze that skimmed it failed to glance. It stuck like a careless moth to so much fly paper—a trap set for no such victim. Ross could not have withdrawn his attention at that moment had an earthquake shaken the plaster from the four walls. He was reading the last will and testament of Gilbert Farrier, Earl of Merylswood. Nor was one reading enough. There were parts of it he feverishly devoured. His wide eyes snapped from side to side as they raced along the lines. Parts of it he muttered aloud. Parts of it he fairly gulped and nearly choked in swallowing. He picked it up—hands trembling—read it again, laid it down, then stood squinting—his eyes focused upon nothing.

Had Farrier entered at that moment he would have looked twice before he could have recognized Ross—the Ross he knew. But luckily the man was alone and only he could hear what his white lips were muttering: "The sea!"—"Four years!"—"Ship's officer!"—"A woman of good repute!" He hesitated while a sudden ecstasy stole the madness from his eyes.

"Three million dollars!" he cried and burst from the room.

When he reached home his family was at dinner. The old man was growling about the steak that was tough, the crew of the *Aggie* that was tougher, the fruit that was green, the *Aggie's* cook who was greener, the knives that were dull, Aggie herself who was duller; his daughter who could not cook, his son who was always late for meals. In fact he had "never seen the likes."

Ross exchanged smiles with Roberta as he seated himself at the table and smoothed his napkin.

"Why are you late, Ross?" asked the mother; "everything will be getting cold."

Ross moved impatiently.

"You know Dick Farrier——"

"*Know* him!" mumbled the skipper. "Hm-mm! You've forced him on us enough."

"You ought to take him along. He was the hardest worker at the yard. He'll make a sailor in no time."

"What do you know what I ought to do?"

"I happen to know a little more about this than you do, that's all. Suppose I were to tell you that Dick Farrier is the son of——"

"Son of a Portuguese sailmaker, that's what!" broke in the skipper; "and suppose I were to tell you, young man, that I don't care if he's the Prince of Wales; he's not going to ship on *my* vessel! *Understand?*"

"No, I don't understand. Just because he's——"

"*Sir-rr!*" roared the skipper. "Don't you open your hatch to me again to-night. It's a jinx ship and a cold day when I can't pick my own crew. Three weeks ago I said I didn't want that sand flea around me. I said *no!* and *no* she stands. So belay! I never saw the likes——"

"And neither have I!" retorted Ross tossing his napkin into his plate and striding out of the room.

Roberta, on the verge of tears, rose and followed her brother.

The old skipper sat glaring questioningly at his wife.

CHAPTER III.

INTRIGUE AND DIPLOMACY.

Some sisters are mere sisters; others, companions, and some few are objects of devotion. Roberta was to Ross as Diana to the priest of Apollo. He worshiped her. Human sacrifice for her sake was his specialty. More than one tongue, tossing the name "Roberta" too lightly, had cost its owner several front teeth or a bill for the restoration of a dislocated jaw. She was a lady, though her schoolmates dubbed her "tomboy" and denizens of St. Helens, "high-f'lootin'." The fact is Roberta was generally herself—perplexedly so, for she sometimes tried to be otherwise.

So much for Roberta. She was more her brother's sister than she was her father's daughter. She knew it and was proud to

return the compliment by making Ross' interests hers.

When they left the table they met in the hall and, in sympathetic conference, left the house. Walking up the dark road Ross urged his sister not to take such petty quarrels to heart, but Roberta held that she was tired of the endless friction between the two people in the world she most loved.

"Why bring up such subjects, Ross?" she queried. "You know father's prejudices. What difference does it make to you whether or not Dick Farrier signs on?"

"Lots of difference," Ross replied. "In the first place, if I ship first officer I'll have more to do with the men than the old man will."

"What of that? You couldn't persuade father to take him along if you tried for a year."

"Bobbie," said Ross with an air of meaning, "you don't know anything about it. I know you don't care two snaps for Dick, but it's all because you've never taken the trouble really to know him."

"Why should I? I'm no snob, I hope, but I have to draw a line somewhere. Take, for instance, Donivan Stevens. Just because father brings him regularly to the house he thinks he can shadow me wherever I go. I'm tired of it. I admire Mr. Stevens as a sailor but scarcely as a"—Roberta faltered; the mere thought was ludicrous—"as a husband! But your friend, Dick Farrier, isn't even a sailor!"

"Not quite a sailor, I'll admit. But suppose I suggest him in the other light."

Roberta stopped so suddenly Ross found himself walking alone and was obliged to retrace his steps.

"Suggest him how?" cried the girl, pure amazement in her tone. "What did you say?"

"You heard me, Bobbie. I mean every word of it. Dick's a gentleman. I knew it the minute I saw him."

"Ross, I don't understand you at all. You say that Dick Farrier—an ordinary *tar dauber*, who can't even qualify for the forecastle, is worthy of—of——"

"Exactly! I'm going to tell you something."

"I'm listening," said the girl resuming her former gait.

"Dick Farrier," began Ross with emphasis, "is the son and heir of Lord Gilbert Farrier, of England."

Roberta glanced hurriedly at her brother. "Did you believe him when he told you?"

"He told me nothing. I found out for myself. No one else knows anything about him." He paused. "To-night, when I knocked off, I stopped for a moment down at the inn to see Dick. He was out, but I happened to see something on the table that looked interesting. It was a copy of a will —a will in favor of Dick Farrier made by his father. It started out with 'In the name of God, Amen,' and something about Gilbert Farrier, Earl of Merylswood, being of sound and disposing mind who was hereby making his last will and testament. I don't remember the exact wording, but I do remember the figures. Gilbert Farrier is leaving five hundred thousand pounds in cash to Dick. Not only that, but a lot of property, including a manor house and Lord knows what—all to his heir, Dick Farrier.

"The point is, he doesn't get the cash yet. The conditions are strange till you figure them out. But it reads that Dick must learn the trade of a seafaring man, get his papers or act in the capacity of a ship's officer aboard a deep-water vessel, and then" —Ross stopped and eyed his sister with a glance that frightened her even more— "then he must marry, the will says, 'an eminently respectable woman of good repute.' He's got to do all this inside of four years after the death of his father, and I guess he's dead now, because here is Dick trying to carry out the requirements—trying to ship aboard the *Aggie* where his opportunity can't be beat. If he fails, although Dick keeps the manor and title, all the money goes to the Associated Charities of London. And that's where it's going sure if the old man has anything more to say about it. He's stubborn as a mule sometimes."

Roberta did not answer at once. But at last she smiled and kicked a battered pine cone which went rattling along down the road.

"A queer will," she mused.

"Not after you've figured it out," said Ross. "The old man, Dick's father, probably had no confidence in his son the way things stacked up when he died. Dick's been a stepper in his time. I've been on several little parties with him and seen him stow enough liquor under his belt to kill an ox. He does it without batting an eye, and the more he drinks the less he talks. Drunk or sober, I've noticed, he's a gentleman and

no mollycoddle either. That's the reason his father was afraid to sink the fortune on him —afraid he'd squander it all. He may be a black sheep but he's red-blooded at that.

"You see, Bobbie, the old boy wanted his son to go to sea as an ordinary swab to learn real work. Then he figured the boy needed a sense of responsibility, so he required that he become an officer. The last requisite—to marry—is to keep him straight and provide heirs for the estate. That's how I get it by putting two and two together." Ross glanced at his sister with a significant nod. "And when there's two or three million dollars hitched to a simple little business transaction it's not to be sniffed at."

"And do you propose that marriage—my marriage—is a simple little business transaction?" objected Roberta. Her mouth smiled but her eyes were troubled and a little sad.

"Don't put it that way, Bobbie," said Ross with a gesture. "I'm thinking of it from your point of view entirely. Here you are, for example, a young girl—an educated girl —one whose father is of the best blood of England but who has no prospects of meeting the type of man she could ever hope to be happy with, just because of the environment she's doomed to. Instead of allowing you to continue your education in some university where your opportunities would be as good as the next—instead of that, they drag you along on a wild-goose chase to Australia and God knows where. From now on your chances are boiled down to prospects like —well, Donivan Stevens. Come on, Bobbie! Get down to facts. We've got to work it so's Dick can come along."

"But why are you so bent on getting me married off? I'm perfectly happy as I am."

"No, you're not. You're like every woman. You have dreams of a home of your own and all that goes with it."

"But, Ross"—and tears were gathering slowly in her soft blue eyes—"do you think I'd marry the first man who came along just because he's a 'gentleman,' or the son of a lord, who keeps his mouth closed when he's had too much to drink?"

"No," emphasized Ross; "of course I don't mean that. I mean—oh, Bobbie, all I mean is that I wish you could be brought to know Dick Farrier and that he could be brought to know you. Whose frame-up would it be then if you both happened to fall in love with each other? Nobody's."

Roberta took her brother by the hand and looked up earnestly.

"Yes, of course, Ross," she said softly, "if we happened to fall in love with each other then, *naturally*. I'd love him in spite of everything."

Ross smiled. "Naturally! You wouldn't want a little thing like three million dollars to stand in the way, would you, Bobbie? Now we understand each other. I only wanted your point of view. You don't think him impossible then as a—as a prospect."

Roberta blushed at the significance of it all but answered: "I don't think so. And if he's your friend I'll try to be a little more genial next time. But when will that be?"

"Leave it to me, Bobbie," said Ross. "That time's coming when we get to sea. You'll have as long as the voyage lasts."

"But, Ross! What on earth are you going to do? Father won't allow it. You know that!"

"He may or he may not. That's not my business. But it *will* be my business to see that Dick comes along. Don't worry. At least not till we get to sea. My job's now; yours later. If Dick can't be part of the crew he'll be part of the cargo!"

CHAPTER IV.

SHANGHAIED.

In every man's life there are moments that work a change stupendous and fade in memory without recognition—gambling moments deciding happiness or sorrow, fame or infamy, life or death as if by the mere tossing of a penny. Every instant brings two chances and carries one away. Each moment is decisive and when the man himself cares not to plot the course other hands, less capable, are there to point the way.

And so a mere document of fiction—a scrap of paper—a single fiber of spunyarn —during the course of one brief moment changed the course of a man's life.

Farrier was thinking of something else when he drew the ominous will from the table and shuffled it into place with other pages of his manuscript. He was asking himself why he did not leave St. Helens. There would be many vessels in many ports that would surely find room for an extra hand. And yet to leave the *Aggie* was to leave an old friend. He had watched her under construction, helped to rig her and learned to know her crew. Time was no ele-

ment now. He could find work with the stevedores, load mining timber and stand by till the vessel would sail.

So he sent the manuscript, "Dick Farrier; or, The Testament of the Sea," to his friend Archie, instructing him to "see it the rounds" and to report results.

During the next week Farrier learned to handle the peavey and lumber hook and to guide the huge sling loads of ten by tw lves into place. He had seen Ross quite often, but it was not until the following Saturday when the deck load was nearly complete that the mate found time for other than his regular duties.

On this particular occasion, however, Ross suggested that they dine together at "The Sign of the Greasy Spoon"—a Greek establishment otherwise named "Mary's Little Lamb." Farrier was glad to accept, and they found space at a well-buttered table in the far corner of the room.

"Thought anything more about shipping aboard the *Aggie?*" asked Ross in the course of conversation.

"Why? Is there a chance?"

"Sure!"

"You mean the skipper's willing to sign me on or something?"

"Something. Yes," said Ross. "There are other ways of shipping besides signing on, you know."

"How's that?"

"Stowaway," said Ross in a low voice.

"What!"

"Stowaway. Why not? Didn't you ever think of that?"

"Yes. *Thought* of it—that's all."

"All right. Why not do it? I'll help you."

"*You,* the mate, help me to stow away on your own ship?"

"She's not my ship, Dick. If she were you'd have the job in a minute. You'll make a sailor in no time. It's born in you. I wouldn't give this opportunity to most fellas, and it doesn't seem like so much of an opportunity at that—except for you——"

"For me? Why discriminate?"

"Well, for you it's different. I know your kind. On the 'gentleman ranker' order. Read Kipling, do you?"

"Some, yes. Do you?"

"Yeh. Bobbie reads all the time. Owns a raft of books; I sort of took to Kipling. But what I'm driving at is, you probably want to ship to, eh—well, to get away from everything. You've set your heart on the *Aggie* maybe, and now I'm willing to help you make it."

Farrier considered for a moment and then, thoughtfully: "No, Ross. I can't start that way. Besides, what does a stowaway get?"

"He gets the worst they can give him generally, I'll admit. But, if it's experience you want, you'll have oceans of it. And later on, dollars to doughnuts, the old man'll find a regular place for you. Sign you on, maybe."

Farrier smiled and breathed deeply. The offer was tempting. It meant adventure. It meant——

Another thought struck him and he looked up skeptically. Perhaps it meant six months' sentence to the galley—dishwashing.

"No!" he said with deliberation. "I might just as well wait for another ship."

"Better think over my proposition," urged Ross. "You might not have such a bad time of it after all. Bobbie'd be tickled to death to have somebody to talk books with."

"You know as well as I do she'd have nothing to do with a stowaway."

"Naw, well—you know about those things," blurted Ross. "You can't tell about a woman. She may be the old man's daughter or anything else. She's a *woman* just the same."

"Yes, but 'just the same,' am I going to stow away for the purpose of talking books with a woman? A stowaway, discussing the categorical imperative with the skipper's daughter!"

"Listen!" said Ross leaning over the table as if to disclose some dark mystery. "You and I've been good pards together and I know what this'll mean to you. I know that once at sea and you'll make good. All you have to do is let me tell you how to work it and you'll be at sea with the rest of us day after to-morrow."

Farrier shook his head. "It's all right as a last resort, but I'll hook on to another ship easy as not."

The mate shifted impatiently and glowered across the table with a puzzled expression Farrier could not interpret. It seemed Ross was actually incensed over the trivial fact that Tarry Dick did not care to stow away aboard the *Aggie.* The two men finished their dinner scarcely speaking to each other. Later, when Farrier bought two cigars, one of which he offered Ross, the latter refused, revealing such bitterness that his lips trem-

bled and his only means of expression was a shaking of the head.

"Wait a second," said Farrier, frowning over the flame as he lighted his cigar. "What's the matter, anyway? What's it all about?"

"If you don't know, I'm not here to tell you. I've got business of my own."

Ross turned away grumbling and disappeared around the corner.

On the following morning, which was Sunday, Farrier rose and found the sun beating through the window and the river winding like liquid tinsel through the green-domed ridges and spires of snow. All was so bright and peaceful he stood dreaming for a moment.

He would find a ship. He would leave town. He would go to Astoria. If there was no vessel for him there he would tramp the world till he found one. Thus determined he dressed and left the room.

A bolted breakfast of "Java and a stack of hots" suggested another cigar. He had not been able to break himself of the expensive habit of smoking Mr. Peck's "twofers."

"Gonna ship after all, are you?" remarked the tobacco dealer sliding the box across the glass counter.

Farrier started. "Who said I was going to ship?"

"Newmiller."

"You don't mean the skipper!"

"Naw, the mate."

"The mate told you, did he?" replied Farrier calming himself on the first three puffs of his cigar and tossing the match into the street. "What does he know about it? He's crazy, or else I am."

Mr. Peck eyed him over the brim of his pipe and adjusted the boxes on the shelf. "Some one's a goof, that's certain," he said; "and maybe, young fella, it ain't the mate. He spilled somethin' here this morning what I ain't sayin' nothin' about. He was three sheets in the wind when he dusted around and it's policy fer this stand t' keep its mouth shut. Ross ain't no goof and never kid yerself. He gives you the chance and you're a fool t' lose it."

"Yes," drawled the other; "a great chance, that was! A chance to stow away!"

"Well, you know better than me. If—— But it's policy fer this stand to keep its mouth shut."

Farrier eyed Mr. Peck challengingly. "Now what are you talking about?" he demanded. "You say the mate was drunk when you saw him this morning?"

"He was loaded to the gun'ls. He says he gave you a chance but that you turned him down. Then he says—well, he was drunk, so he wasn't much responsible." Mr. Peck paused and refilled his pipe. "But he knowed what was best for you," he continued, "if you don't."

"He's not drunk I tell you. He acted queer last night and there wasn't a whiff of liquor on him."

"Well, I don't know," replied the clerk dubiously; "he did have it on 'im this mornin'. I smelled it! And a man what's liquored don't tell no lies!"

"What was it then, that *was no lie?*" cried Farrier.

"He told me just what I s'pected first ever I seen you. But it ain't policy t' be spreadin' nuthin' from this here stand. Don't worry. You'll be glad after it's all over."

"After what's over?"

"Aw, now just you run along," advised Mr. Peck patronizingly. "You got too much out o' me already. Just keep your little shirt on and don't worry. It'll all pan out jake and rosy. Just one little tip, though; don't be surprised at nothin'; keep your food trap shut. And don't ask no more questions. Don't worry, you're all right."

This was too much. With one wild glance at the tobacco dealer, Farrier puffed off down the street like a mad locomotive with white smoke curling behind him. He encountered Ben-Tenny, now known as the *Aggie's* third mate, whom he gripped by the arm and dragged along after him.

"Come on, Ben," growled Farrier gnawing his cigar to a pulp, "I can't stand this any longer!"

"Cawn't stand *w'at!* Devil tyke you, matey, w'at ails yeh?"

"Don't know."

"Drunk?"

"No. Not yet. Do you know the steward of the steam schooner over there?"

"That I do. But w'at's got into yeh?"

"That's just what I've got to find out. Introduce me to the steward and I'll set you up to the last cent I've got on me."

" 'Ow much is that?" asked the Britisher.

"Ten," replied the other.

"Two quarts!" cried the Britisher.

"Enough," muttered the other. And they boarded the "blind pig" arm in arm.

Farrier was introduced to the steward—a little sheep-faced man in a visored cap, and light blue-striped breeches who glanced suspiciously at his new customer.

"Don't mind 'im," said Ben-Tenny with a confidential nod; " 'e's all right."

"And you won't none of you say where it was you got it?" asked the steward still eying Farrier.

"It ain't nobuddy's business w'ere it is we gets it, I always sye."

"How much for two quarts?" asked Farrier.

"It's yours fer five a quart and it's fair enough, the risk I'm takin'."

They agreed and the steward joined them in three man-sized drinks before he suggested their finding a safe exit.

Five minutes later found Farrier and Ben-Tenny enjoying a confidential chat in the seclusion of Riverview Inn. Ben denied any knowledge of the mate's mysterious proceedings but owned that Ross was a very peculiar bloke. None who had ever sailed with him could understand his actions. With whisky in him he was a match for the devil. Ben continued enumerating incidents, each of which involved a long sea yarn and several more drinks until the second quart was opened and half drained. The third mate's voice seemed to grow farther and farther away, and a familiar numbness crept over Farrier's face—a tingling feeling which generally served as a warning. But he poured out another quarter of a tumbler and drank it down.

He remembered no more until a year later, or perhaps it was only a minute, when strange forms appeared, moving here and there in the glare of bright lights. There were lights everywhere and the jangle of steam winches rang in his ears like a nightmare.

He looked about. Ben was gone. He was in the lumber yard, the *Aggie* alongside the mill docks working a night shift.

Farrier lifted himself from a pile of pine chips and shavings, thoroughly disgusted with himself and life in general. He was as thirsty as he was penniless. Weaving his way through the huge lumber stacks he started for the inn. His one remaining suit of clothes was torn and dirty and his head was bare. As he walked there passed before him every misspent day of his life. He was part of a muddled dream where every step ahead meant another backward.

On he went through never-ending shadows, beaten down in spirit and scarcely able to carry his freeboard. But he stopped. A shadow moved behind a stack of lumber. Fearing it to be the watchman he crept behind the same pile and moved cautiously forward for assurance.

His eyes had not deceived him. He was promptly confronted by a figure but it was not the watchman. Men of that trade seldom wore masks. Strangely, however, the masked man made no further motion and remained silent. Farrier stood for a moment half bewildered; then smiled. He was thinking of his penniless condition.

"How much blood can you squeeze out of a turnip?" he drawled reaching for the support of the stack.

The figure raised its arm and in the hand was a small blackjack. The last of a blurred nightmare ended, but only in time for another to begin.

It was a burlesque of the monstrous and the indescribable: tangled eels in a jungle of devil's grass; vermilion salamanders munching white-hot carpet tacks, and the wreck of a thousand hells. This was about all Farrier could recall of the incident. He had passed through a kaleidoscopic jumble of torment until, as his consciousness seeped back, the air was stifling hot, though a cool sweat covered his body and saturated what remained of his clothing.

He shivered and moved his arms, but each hand came in contact with a solid wall of wood. He shuddered and drew them in. He rubbed the moisture from his throbbing head. Nothing was connected. He could scarcely remember his own name and not until he recalled his alias did incidents of the recent past begin to link themselves.

A prevailing rumble, characteristic of his delirium, seemed to emanate from some hidden chasm far beneath. It vibrated the timbers on which he lay. The same swimming, rising and falling sensation, as in his dream, rolled him from side to side, and seemed to tug at his vitals.

Whether his eyes were open or closed it made no difference. The darkness was as impenetrable and thick as the congestion, buzzing like bees in the cells of his brain.

Painfully he braced himself upon his elbows to sit upright. But his head encountered the same splintery substance which walled him on either side. He fell back groaning. He squirmed about in despair,

like a lizard in a match box, bumping his head on every partition until, gasping for air, he fell forward.

Time dragged him to torture before he became aware of his grim surroundings. The walls confining him were none other than the mining timber comprising the *Aggie's* cargo; the rumble and vibrations were from the auxiliary motors, and the rising and falling sensation could be caused only by the roll of a seaway. He had been shanghaied. This was his prison.

But the motive, the means applied, this prison which must have been prepared for him, filled him with bewilderment. Who was responsible? Why had it been done?

He sounded the walls with his fist, but their solidity appalled him. He called out, but the sound of his voice came back like that of an awakened corpse six feet below the surface of the ground. He beat against the projecting ends of the timbers at either extremity of the vault, but their stability filled him with terror. He called again—this time louder than before—but only the rumble and creaking of the ship as she bent over the heavy swells answered.

"No use," he thought and lay face down to the timbers, feeling the dry stickiness of his inflamed throat aching for want of water.

But here, strange as it seemed, the air was fresher. He even felt a slight draft from one corner. Eagerly he searched for the crevice which might admit light, but found nothing.

CHAPTER V.

MAN OVERBOARD!

The *Aggie Newmiller* was rounding the lightship off San Francisco where she had discharged a contractor and squared away in search of the northeast trades bound for Port Pirie.

During the first two days at sea Roberta had been uneasy. Ross had not been himself. He had come aboard in Astoria overloaded with whisky—some with his dunnage, some "on the hip" and still more in the supreme position of authority. She had asked him about Dick Farrier. He had answered with a knowing grin but said nothing.

She noticed, too, that her father was not altogether satisfied with the new vessel. He disliked the way she handled, to say nothing of his son's methods of handling her. Besides the skipper Donivan Stevens seemed to be the only reliable deck officer. The old sea dude had suddenly turned one hundred per cent man. He bellowed his commands and the men jumped to obey. Roberta saw that they respected him and was the more ashamed of her brother.

Dick Farrier was aboard. She knew it and was afraid. She had accepted her brother's plan—shouldered an obligation—and now, though the thought terrified her, she must see it through. She braced herself against the taffrail and watched the man at the wheel as he swayed from side to side, glancing now at the compass and now at the horizon. Stevens was pacing the deck, throwing his huge chest into the wind and leaning heavily against the swells. Occasionally he glanced at her. If their eyes met he would wear about and sing out to the men forward: "Lay aloft there, Dumb-bell! Clear away that Irish pendant!" or, "Ho there, Dish-face, bend on a watch tackle! Where's yer brains?"

Roberta smiled. She was amused and, at the same time, fascinated. He stood like a great Colossus, unshaken by the elements—using them. She saw the great white sail on the foremast cease its haphazard flapping in the changing winds—saw it tremble and grow steady at his command. This was not the seafaring dandy she had known in St. Helens. He was to be respected—admired, even. He was a man other men feared, yet one to jump when she, Roberta, pulled the string.

She wanted to hear his great voice ring out again. He seemed to be aware of her gaze and began bellowing at the men like an angry band saw.

Roberta smiled again—this time with satisfaction. There was mischief in her eyes. She was young and the sudden realization of her power surprised her. It was her own youth imbued with a strange pride rather than veneration for Stevens that the latter saw but failed to understand. When he came to her he did not know that she had drawn him. Nor did she. She only surmised.

"Well," he drawled, glancing over the ship, "what d' yeh think of 'er?"

Roberta knew that he really meant: "How do you like me now?" but she only nodded her approval and asked:

"Does it ever get much rougher?"

She knew of course that it did, but en-

joyed the touch of scorn which flickered across his lips.

"Rougher!" he cried, daring to scoff at her ignorance. "Ha-ah! This is only a breeze!" And he went on to tell her about the weather off "Cape Stiff," the hurricanes off the West Indies, the typhoons of the China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and many other places. "Yes, miss," he went on with an affected sigh, "I've seen it blow the hair off a man's head!"

They were interrupted at this point, however, when Ben-Tenny brushed past with his sextant. Stevens took leave and dropped below for his own, passing the skipper in the companionway who reeled to the poop and began sniffing up wind.

"Where's your nose?" he snapped turning toward the wheelhouse.

"Sou'west-be-south, sir," was the wheelman's reply.

"Hold 'er there!" returned the skipper. "Where's the mate?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Don't know! Of course you don't. Answer when you're spoken to. I say! Mr. Ben! Where's the mate?"

Ben-Tenny looked away from his sextant. "Down't know, sir. I ain't seen 'im since breakfast."

"Find him. Send him up."

The third mate hurried away but did not return. The skipper and Stevens "took the sun" as it crawled over the meridian and the wheelman rang eight bells.

"Never saw the likes of it," grumbled the old man, applying his figures to the hatch coaming. "Mate drunk. Drunk three days. Not worth three slaps of a dirty swab." He paused a moment to check his reckoning, dropped the stub of his pencil into his vest pocket and turned in time to catch the eye of the wheel relief.

"You!—whatever your name is—rub those pencil marks off the hatch."

"Gost is my name, sor."

"What's that?"

"Gost—Gost Mathsen."

"Oh, never mind that. Swab off that hatch coaming. I don't care if you're the dirty king of Norway."

"Vaal-ll," drawled the Norwegian, who had spent most of his life in the coastwise trade, "you asked me vawt my name vaws, and ven I——"

"Go along with your nonsense," roared the old man clenching an impatient fist.

The stubborn sailor did not move. He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. They were smashed back into a muddled brain that in the next instant was drifting away with the bubbles behind the ship. The skipper reached out for him as the man fell back over the taffrail; but too late.

Roberta closed her eyes in horror and blindly groped forward to the companionway, while the cries rang out fore and aft:

"Man overboard!"

She heard her father's commands rising above the thunder of flapping canvas, the chuckle of racing sheaves and the stamp and shuffle of feet on the deck above. Roberta burst into the cabin and fell sobbing on her mother's shoulder. She could not speak, but Mrs. Newmiller understood. She had seen men punished at sea and sympathized with her daughter's terror.

A half hour later Captain Newmiller, somewhat dejected, stepped into the cabin, but Roberta avoided him, returning again on deck where Ben-Tenny was giving orders to trim sail. The *Aggie* was back to her former course, but the blundering Norwegian was gone.

Donivan Stevens came from the wheelhouse where he had been entering records in the log book.

"A lesson for the rest of 'em, miss," he said. "The old man don't mean no harm. It was Gus' fault in the first place fer tossin' too much lip and then fer stumblin' overboard. Bless me, I recall the day when a man was in luck to be looked for even. We done our best to locate the beggar. Sharks, mebby. We didn't see so much as a rag of 'im. I tell yeh what, yeh can't come up in stays with this vessel in no two squirts of a bilge pump."

Roberta smiled faintly. She had accused her father of murder. But now, perhaps because it was impossible to harbor the thought, she was glad to take refuge in deception. She found herself listening again to wild tales of things so much more ghastly that the original impression was frightened away. This time the yarns were of the Solomon Islands where cannibals still existed. Stevens told how he had started a plantation, many years ago, on Ysabel Island. It could be done, he averred, by taking advantage of tribal differences or natural rancor between the two factors: salt-water men and bushmen. By recruiting the latter in sufficient numbers, he explained, one might

establish a plantation in territory inhabited by the salt-water men, as long as the recruited force was strong enough to meet the constant attacks of outlying hostile tribes. But in the case where the recruits were too strong, too well united or too friendly among themselves, there was grave danger always of uprising. It was such a revolt Stevens now described. He told how three of his fellow planters had been beheaded, broiled at the stake and eaten. He told of his own hairbreadth escape in a canoe from which he saw his plantation in flames and how the savages pursued him until he was finally picked up by a British gunboat and rescued.

"Them was the *old* days," he mused, "but there's cannibals still—oodles of 'em what never been tamed—never seen a white man, even. Why, miss, there's parts of Malaita Island, south of where I was, where no white man ever been and come back alive."

So he continued until "Barnacle Joe," the cook, who had announced luncheon over an hour ago, grew impatient, and Stevens followed Roberta into the cuddy, leaving Ben-Tenny to mind his watch.

The skipper sat at the head of the table, Mrs. Newmiller and Roberta upon his right and those of the ship's officers not on duty filled the other chairs—all but one: that of Ross. Ross had been forgotten during the excitement and none but Roberta bothered about him now.

According to the long-established custom of the sea all waited for the skipper to open the conversation. After a disagreeable silence he did. He was frowning at the vacant chair.

"Where's Ross?" he demanded. "Where is he? Always late. Never on time! Never on the job. Who'd I tell to find him?"

No one answered.

"No wonder there's insubordination in the crew with such a mate. Confounded nuisance!"

"Saw 'im below a couple of hours ago," said the second engineer, Ed O'Neil. "He was borrowing a claw hammer of the oiler."

"He was drunk, Mr. O'Neil. That's what."

The engineer smiled with a confiding nod at the skipper but did not see the grinning object, daubed and torn, that appeared in the doorway and surveyed the company with strict scrutiny.

"D-drunk, was I," came the voice from the entrance.

Every one looked up but scarcely recognized the man they saw. He was dirty and covered with red, as if he had been rolling in blood. Mrs. Newmiller gasped. Roberta trembled while the creature staggered forward and flounced down at the vacant place. The chief, Bill Kennedy, began to laugh but the old man was up in a whirl of rage. He had recognized Ross.

"Out of here! Out of here, sir! Sharp!" he bellowed.

Ross only grinned and reached for food. Kennedy continued to shake with mirth.

"He's been up against my red lead," he laughed to O'Neil.

"Thaz-all right," blurted Ross. "I don' mind a li'l' red paint."

"What the devil's he been up to?" demanded the skipper of the chief.

"I'll-ll t-tell you what I been up to!" cried Ross. "Mutiny an' ins'bor-d'nation, you say! Waal-ll, I say right back at you: assault and battery on the high seas and one man missin'. I didn't d-do it, did I? No, I did not. But there's a man missin' jazza-same, isn't there? There is! Or there might 'a' been, if I hadn't found another jazz-as good. I found 'im, see? He got stuck in the c-cargo, an' I d-damn near got stuck g-getting 'im out. Funny joke, that, aye? But I got 'im out jazza-same. An' now there's nobody missin'. An' b'sides—b'sides, this one's b-better than the one you kicked overboard. Funny joke, that, aye?"

"Get him out of here!" cried the skipper. "Put him in irons till he sobers up. I won't have any more of this!"

Roberta rose and left the cuddy. She was still trembling and her eyes were filled with terror. Ed O'Neil dragged the drunken man away. Mrs. Newmiller fell sobbing—her arms across the table, burying her face. The second day of a long voyage was little more than half over.

During these occurrences on deck and in the mess room other things were happening below—things known only to Ross and Dick Farrier.

What Farrier had taken for the extremities of long timbers were merely blocks laid like bricks to form a wall and made fast from without. He did not discover this until he heard the tapping of a hammer and the screeching of nails being uprooted. The sound was bubbling fountains to a bursting

tongue. He was thirsty—so thirsty that hunger was forgotten and the god of mercy was a joke. He had called upon death as a man in need often calls upon a friend he has forgotten.

When Farrier heard the tapping on the wall of his vault he was grateful for he had called upon Death as a friend. But Life had wooed him. He loved her. She came as a cool hand upon his forehead—a breath of air—a shaft of light and the wall of his prison crumbled away. He dragged himself forward in time to see the shadow of a man sliding into a dark passage. He called. The shadowy object hesitated, then vanished without a sound.

Unable to suppress a faint groan Farrier slid from the inclosure and braced himself between the skin of the vessel and a tank—a huge red tank slippery with fresh paint.

He squinted through a recess at the heavy whirl of metals, dull shining levers and brasses. An oiler, with waste stringing from his hip, was tiptoeing on the grating and twirling a spluttering oil valve. An engineer seated on an iron stairway was wiping grease from the back of a tattooed dragon spiraled about his arm.

Farrier watched as he brushed some flakes of dry blood from the hollow of his cheek, then slid cautiously along the bilge stringer, his spine bumping the rivets. He hesitated an instant at the ladder to look back, then dragged himself up through the scuttle and sat panting on the deck of the lazaret. It was dark save for a half-starved shaft of light which reached feebly from a porthole and fumbled among the stores as the vessel rolled. The air was heavy with the aroma of fresh provisions, but this only intensified his longing for water. One glassful and he would ask nothing more—not as long as he lived.

Rising with determination he pushed forward through the racks—racks supporting boxes of soda crackers, hard-tack, salt hams, bacon, dried apples, dried apricots—everything was dried, dried and damned by the devils that mocked his thirst. Desperately he blundered on, tripping over boxes, stumbling upon flour sacks and clambering over barrels until he reached the door, burst it open and stepped through.

He stopped, started, and his courage fell before the pale face of Roberta who backed against the table and stood staring.

"Dick Farrier!" she gasped and reached out as if to retract the runaway words.

Tarry Dick was in the *sanctum sanctorum*, the skipper's quarters, and the skipper was there. He was glaring, sucking in his mouth and twirling a pair of dividers about an axis pin pointed on the chart before him.

Farrier's eyes snapped nervously from the old man to Roberta. He wondered what aroused such sudden emotion in the girl who had previously shunned him. But the thought was smothered in a burning whirl of impressions impinging on the utter misery of his confinement. Blasphemy burned his throat for an exit.

"Well?" said the old man with a baked clay expression. "What washed you in?" He paused to glance at Roberta whose hands fluttered to her throat. "Stowed away, did you?" His former calm soared up in fire. "By the Lord Harry, I'll teach you to stow away on my ship. Hawse rat, eh? You stand the chances of an iceberg in hell, that's what!"

Farrier was about to return the enfilade when he glanced at Roberta. Her eyes seemed to be begging and pleading guilty. So he checked his anger, but the fire in his throat rose higher and darted malignantly from his eyes.

"Now drag your carcass out of here!" roared the old man. "Sharp! Or I'll——"

But the charge was repelled by a smirk of defiance. Instead of withdrawing Farrier stepped forward. He clenched his fists. He searched the old man's eyes for a trace of something human, but could find none.

"You'll listen to what I have to say first!" he said in a hoarse, dry voice.

The skipper rose with the mad speed of a whirlwind and beat upon the table with his fist.

"Damn rag of a ship rat! Out of here! Sharp, or I'll——" But he choked in his rage, thumped back in his chair and remained there humped like a wet tomcat.

"Now wait a minute," said Farrier boldly; "I did not stow away. I was——"

"You did *not* stow away," yelled the skipper. "You—you swam here, I suppose."

Roberta's face was colorless as sculptor's clay.

"No, sir," retorted Farrier. "I was shanghaied."

"You was—you were *what?*"

"I was shanghaied! I didn't want to

come on your damned old scow and I'll be glad to leave first chance I get."

Farrier glanced unconsciously at Roberta. He was not accustomed to damning things in the presence of women. She watched him intently from the seat upon which she had crumpled. She was gripping two large cushions and her eyes begged forgiveness. When they struck their mark they glanced away again, and then came the barest shadow of a smile—not a real one, but a light whimsical twist, half tearful. It grew into a slight frown and she shook her head. Farrier regarded her with awe. He felt vaguely the sensations of a "tattletale" at school, though he could not, for the life of him, guess why. He smiled involuntarily and the anger he had held in check was snuffed.

"Who the devil shanghaied *you?*" asked the old man suddenly becoming interested.

Farrier would have told the whole story but for Roberta who, by means of invisible reins, guided his tongue. So he did not tell of his prison nor of the warden he rightly suspected. He concocted a yarn, but the concoction was threadbare and the skipper saw through.

"You lie!" he cried before Farrier could invent a conclusion.

Tarry Dick smiled foolishly. When he looked at Roberta her eyes were smiling "thank you."

At that moment Donivan Stevens entered with the log book. Seeing Farrier he stopped, bewildered.

"Mr. Stevens," cried the skipper, "drag this church mouse out of here!"

Stevens' amazement twisted itself to contempt.

"Through the hawse pipe, aye? Well if that don't splinter the monkey gaff!" He stared at Farrier nodding ridicule. "If 'tweren't we was short-handed right now I'd toss——"

"Never mind that," grumbled the skipper. "Get 'im out of here!"

Farrier did not wait for orders. Within him thirst and hunger had united in a single passion—a passion for anything from a drink of water and a crust of bread to murder. He could have killed the second mate for his insolence without a qualm, but over him had crusted a hard shell, slander-proof, and only water could dissolve it. Water! If it were held from him another moment he would die. Everything was a jumble of black when he reeled into the galley. Next he heard a voice and saw a saucepan before him.

At first he did not drink. He bit through the surface. One mouth was not enough. He needed four. Barnacle Joe, who was looking on, scratched his head through a pie-shaped hat.

"Val, if dat don't beat all de smeared-up lobscouse ever I made, I'll eat a ton of it myself!"

"I'll eat two tons of it if you'll be so kind as to——"

"Sure-nuff!" said the cook and helped him to what remained of the lunch.

Farrier invented a new story of how and why he happened to be on board. This time instead of being shanghaied he had stowed away. The yarn was accepted. He spent a pleasant three quarters of an hour with the little cook, whose name seemed quite fitting. He was a tenacious little fossil ready to stick to any keel upon which he might wash. He had even cooked for "Yon D. Rockerfaller," he said, and with such sincerity Farrier was half inclined to believe him. He had cooked on ocean liners, cattle boats and smugglers. He had cooked aboard ferries, river barges and Norwegian fishermen. He had cooked on whalers. He had cooked on Chinese junks—he had cooked in so many places that the fiery regions of Hades to him would be like the brier brush to *Ol' Br'er Rab'it.*

"Have a drink!" he said producing a half-empty bottle of white liquid. "Dis here'll put yeh on yer legs."

Farrier examined the bottle. It was lemon extract.

"Ven dere ain't no visky yeh can pull over de high spots on dis stuff!"

"No thanks. It would knock me cold. I'm sick as it is. I'm not in the habit yet, you know, of eating and drinking."

"Anodder time, den, eh? Dere's a whole case of it aft." He chuckled and drained the bottle. "Trost me, lad, fer teh gat a good supply w'en I orders de stores."

Farrier laughed but he did not feel merry. His head ached. He was sick. The stiffness in his bones was urging him to remain where he was but Donivan Stevens, now, was urging otherwise. Thrusting his head through the galley door, he called:

"Turn to there, hawse rat. Didja think it was yer birthday?"

Farrier shrugged his shoulders, nodded to the cook and dragged himself out of the galley. The men stared at him. Those

who had seen him previously in St. Helens laughed and conjectured with their companions.

"Lay farrard," ordered Stevens. "You'll find white paint and a brush in the bos'n's locker. I want all them seizin's on the shrouds and backstays painted."

Farrier obeyed. The task was easier than any he had hoped for, though his present physical equipment was ready to handle little more. He wondered a little as he walked forward, for he did not see Roberta standing aside and smiling with gratitude upon her merciful Donivan Stevens, nor did he see the magnanimity in the expression returned. Later, however, as he dragged on with his task, he noticed the two talking together and heard remarks from some of the men which made his blood tingle with indignation.

Four bells sounded and the watches shifted, but Farrier continued with his work. Ben-Tenny, the third mate, relieved Stevens and Roberta started to go below.

Farrier was seated on the pinrail in the starboard jigger rigging as she passed. She paused in the companionway as if to speak, but instead smiled constrainedly, glanced back over her shoulder, tossed her head and vanished.

Farrier was strangely amused. There was something irresistible about the pert audacity of her. And yet, he thought, she was too young; too unsophisticated; too—what was it—too pretty, perhaps, to trifle with men—the men with whom he was classed.

"By all the bloomin' spooks!" cried Ben-Tenny, who discovered Farrier for the first time. "Tarry Dick! 'Owever did yeh manage it?"

Farrier slid down to the poop, returning the welcome and, at Ben-Tenny's suggestion, the two went forward to the boatswain's locker.

"Bly'me, matey," exclaimed Ben-Tenny when they were alone; "unwind yer bloomin' self!"

Farrier, this time, told the whole truth as he remembered it while the third mate listened eagerly.

"Blarst the stuff!" muttered the Britisher. "I recall nothing arfter the time yeh was wantin' t'try me snuff. Yeh swallers 'arf. Most choked, yeh did, and then I cawn't fer the 'art o'me think w'at 'appened. Powerful stuff, I sye. Yeh know, matey, w'en I woke it was morning. Ther I was, blarst it, sprawled over yer bunk—the sun beating through the window. Gawd knows w'ere *you* was. All yer dunnage missin', too. Well, says I t'meself, the bloke's skipped the premists—left me t'pye the bill!"

"All my clothes gone, you say?" asked Farrier.

"Every stitch of 'em, so 'elp me! The *Aggie* was about t' cast off and I just barely made the guard rail w'en the lines was being 'ove in."

CHAPTER VI.

FROM GIBE TO JIBE.

That evening the sea was calm; the ship restored to peace. Farrier assigned himself to Mathsen's old bunk in the forecastle, and located his dunnage in the forepeak stowed with kegs of oleomargarine and salt beef.

Under normal conditions the forecastle of a vessel, if not the vessel itself, is an example to the world. Live and let live—toleration—is the secret. Men of many nationalities, assorted races and varying habits; men of superlative differences physically, mentally and morally; men with no choice of association, generally of little or no education, are mustered together and kept like bees in a hive for weeks—months at a time. Discord, sometimes. It has its place in the tune they play; but they have learned to expect and muffle it when it comes.

When Mathsen was lost there was discord in the forecastle. Naturally. Harmony under such circumstances is apt to bring mutiny. But there were those who said Gus Mathsen deserved it; others who termed it accident and still others who preferred to have no opinion at all. The voyage was to be a long one. Enough trouble dangled from the five masts without hoisting more.

Yet one of their number, Jack, held that Mathsen was still aboard. That he would avenge himself if the ship's hands did not take action against the old man. "Gloomy Gus," whose face was red and round as the rising moon, scoffed at the idea; but "Blackfin," a swarthy man of Scandinavian descent, calmly laid the responsibility of revenge to the new occupant of the dead man's bunk.

Farrier thought the remark rather assuming as did Gloomy Gus, who said: "Vy yomp on Tarry? He got tro'bles a plenty t'last de voyage." So the topic was sidetracked but not altogether forgotten.

Farrier turned in with the starboard watch and smothered his cares in the odor

of blankets. Jack, who occupied a bunk across the way, was smacking his lips and plunging his soul into the seducing sweetness of *Sappy Stories*. Gloomy Gus, in a bunk directly under Jack's, was silently reading the Bible. Black-fin, unable to read, wallowed in a litter of disheveled blankets and struck at flies.

There was an odor about the inclosure—one that tar and oilskins failed to neutralize. Farrier, the unacclimated, puffed his pipe, and breathed deeply into the hovering cloud. It was balm in Gilead and his heart drifted lightly with the white vapor. Lying at full length he listened to the wash of the sea as it parted at the bow and boiled aft. Through the nebulous air, by way of the door, the ocean crisped with a thousand moon-capped waves—a study of writhing lights, coiling and uncoiling on a rainbow film of glaze. He could hear the booted thud of the lookout on the deck above, the constant checking of booms against blocks and bails and the bending creak of timbers from the hold. But it all grew faint—farther and farther away. Sleep came—the first for many nights.

But sleep on the high seas, though self-started, has its sudden and automatic finish. About the time one feels the blissful tingling of "Good-by world, until I choose to wake," some one else does the choosing and the watches shift again—four hours on, four hours off; watch and watch, watch and watch, until the world seems in high gear, trebling its velocity and forgetting the units of day and night. To those unaccustomed to the subdivisions it is disconcerting to say the least. But despite it all, three days bring solace. At any rate Farrier found it so. Sleep came in regular made-to-order installments, and there was no difficulty in taking advantage of it. In fact, even during his night watches on deck, when there was no wheel nor lookout duty, he could "take the calk" with the best of them, and sail through the Misty Mountains.

They were peaceful days—those that followed. The light breeze stiffened and sudden puffs from the northeast plunged the *Aggie* before them, and slipped bones in her teeth. The log clicked along, averaging a hundred and fifty miles a day. True, the *Aggie* might have done better considering her auxiliaries, but with perceptible progress and all canvas drawing, time went smoothly enough.

Ross had been restored to duty and sobriety, and although the skipper dogged his steps, he seemed strangely self-respecting—proud, actually commanding the regard of his men.

Tarry Dick was discreet, forgetting old friendships. Ben-Tenny, Stevens and Ross were officers, and he showed them respect. Ben-Tenny accepted it; Ross demanded it and Donivan Stevens took it for granted. Roberta? She was a problem. She trifled with it.

It happened the first time early one morning as Farrier stood to wheel. Ross, the "chief kicker," held down the poop and waited to catch the lower limb of the sun as it broke from the horizon. As the sun cleared the sky line he left the bridge, counting seconds for correction on the chronometer.

Farrier was alone. He was drowsy—staring into the compass box and taking a point liberty to either side of the given course. But he heard the gentle slam of a door from the companionway, saw a shadow from the corner of his eye and looked up. It was Roberta.

Needless to say Farrier became suddenly wide awake.

Roberta was conscientiously observing nothing but the fresh splendor of the morning. She sat on the taffrail and stretched her bare arms in the virgin sun rays, watching her shadow lengthen and grow short as the ship rolled in the seaway.

The lubber's line and the compass card were nothing in Tarry Dick's young life now. The wake behind the *Aggie* might as well have been a succession of spirals for all the ship was worth to the helmsman at that moment. And who could blame him? Was there ever anything more entrancing than a pretty girl in a blue kimono seated on a taffrail spreading her arms to the winds? And yet she was no longer thus engaged. She was walking slowly along with a hand to her forehead looking into the sun.

Maybe it was her tiny Japanese slippers or the short, glossy waves of her brown hair. Or was it the manner in which her delicate white arm lent itself to the setting of silver and red as she shaded her eyes from the sun? But why stop to analyze? It was Roberta, and Roberta alone. She was beautiful and Farrier fell in love with her beauty.

Only one thing displeased him: her silent acknowledgment of that fact! her frank

vanity and boldness. Farrier wanted to crush it with icy indifference; but knowing that she was being looked at she refused to look. She *assumed* the presence of hungry eyes and seemed not to blame them in the least. She was so close to him now that he could have reached through the door and —what could he have done? He did not know. He only glared with determination into the compass box and nearly rumbled the wheel from its bearings trying to restore the ship to her course.

Roberta turned and backed away to the rail, smiling.

"How are you this morning, Mr. Farrier?" she asked.

"Sleepy," was the reply.

She glanced down at her robe and quickly drew the folds closer together, exposing a slim little ankle as she did so. A charming flush crimsoned her soft cheeks, and with a sudden movement, she pushed back her curls in defiance.

"You can tell the most beautiful fibs of any man I ever knew," she volunteered. "Why didn't you *tell* the captain how you got aboard, instead of trying to invent such a yarn?"

"Do *you* know how I got aboard?"

"No," she answered truthfully.

"Then I don't know why I did lie—but I believe you made me."

"How?"

"I don't know how, but you did."

"Do you think I had anything to do with it?"

"I thought so—or, that is, I must have thought *something* when I began my yarn to the skipper."

"Well, why on earth should *I* have any special desire to have you on board?"

"That's it! Why should you?"

"It seems to me you are assuming quite a bit, Mr. Farrier!"

"Then do you deny that it was Ross who shanghaied me, beat me over the head with a shillalah and buried me under twenty feet of cargo?"

"I didn't know he was going to do all that!"

"What *did* you think he was going to do?"

"I assure you, Mr. Farrier, I had no idea."

"But after it was done—you didn't know then?"

"I found it out, yes," she acknowledged.

"But you don't know his object?"

"He was—he was intoxicated." She paused and studied him boldly. "Aren't you afraid to be talking like this to me, Mr. Farrier?"

"Talking how?"

"Aren't you afraid to be talking to me *at all?*"

"Why afraid?"

"Suppose my father should see you—what then?"

"I'll bite! What?"

"It's hardly customary, you know, for a —a stowaway——"

"Do you object?"

"*I* don't. No, but——"

"But what?"

"Aren't you afraid that some one else might object. You're taking a risk, Mr. Farrier."

"No," he replied. "I'm not afraid of that."

"My!" she exclaimed; "aren't you *brave?*"

Farrier became enraged. He turned upon her sharply. "And you, Miss Newmiller, are a very brave girl!"

"Perhaps it's because I admire bravery."

Farrier saw that she was almost sincere this time and did not mind it when she added, "I like men who are not afraid. You're not like most sailors, are you, Mr. Farrier?"

And Mr. Farrier *did* "bite!" He swallowed the bite, hook, sinker and all and started out gayly for the bottom of the sea. Roberta reeled out to him and saw her chance to strike.

"Why different from 'most sailors?' " asked Farrier.

"Most sailors," said Roberta, "who *are* sailors—can hold a course. You're writing your name all over the ocean."

She laughed at him over her shoulder and vanished down the companionway.

At that moment there came a thunder of canvas. The fore gaff jibed. The booms crashed against their tackles and swung back to their sheets again.

Farrier cursed and spun the wheel hard into the wind. Hell could have held no furies like the skipper had he come on deck at that moment.

Another second might have lifted the five sticks. But luckily no one came and the sails trimmed and filled as the vessel steadied on her course again.

Farrier was broken. His pride was torn

like a toad under the harrow. And a girl —a mere child—held the whip.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAGIC COMEDY.

Fifteen days had passed since the *Aggie* broke anchor below Fort Stevens and squared away past Tillamook Rock. She was entering the northeast trades, her course having been directed toward Diamond Head with Honolulu cited as a possible port of call. But there had been no trouble with the auxiliaries to warrant delay, so now the schooner fell off more to the south, bound for the region of squalls and rain.

Farrier was relieved. A call at Honolulu might have marked the end of his voyage. The foremast hands were union men and, even had it pleased the skipper to retain the stowaway as a regular hand, the men might have demanded his discharge. As it was no one cared. There was nothing in the present state of things to infringe on union laws save, perhaps, Farrier's present berth in the forecastle. The men were at liberty to turn him out but, so far, no one saw the advantage in so doing. Many of them liked Tarry Dick. They took pleasure in teaching him the various twists of seamanship and, incidentally, displaying their own skill. In spite of his previous experiences on yachts Farrier professed ignorance and, for this reason, he was gradually learning the ways of a seafaring man.

He also took up the study of navigation. Every day during the four hours he could call his own he passed the time with Ben-Tenny's sextant, learning to compute latitude and longitude and to make up a "day's work" for his private log.

This pleased Ross. He pointed it out to his sister with, "See? What did I tell you?"

Mrs. Newmiller, too, had become interested in the "young intruder"—very interested. She had learned all the strange details of Farrier's predicament and had tried to explain his case to her husband. But the old man only replied: "That softshell! What are you talking about?"

Whether he believed it or not, however, he sometimes left the poop and sent the second officer below when Farrier happened to be at the wheel and when his daughter happened on deck.

Roberta found herself in a strange situation. Her family looked to her for progress and it was through vanity, rather than affection, that she hoped to bring his lordship, the stowaway, captive to her feet.

"Surely," she would tell herself, "I could not marry him for his money. But perhaps while I am teaching him to realize the destiny of his own heart I can learn that of my own and, when the time comes, I'll act entirely according to my conscience."

Of course this was humbug. Love is seldom made to order. Roberta was trying to mislead herself just as she was trying to mislead Farrier, and there was little success in either instance.

Donivan Stevens was her only victim. During the first few days at sea he had noticed the girl's growing admiration for him, and his hopes sprouted and grew like weeds.

Then came Tarry Dick, the upstart hawse rat. What in the world was there about him that so engaged Roberta's attention? Farrier was a skinflint. He, Donivan Stevens, was a model of physical perfection. Farrier was a stowaway. He, Donivan Stevens, was second mate of the *Aggie* and holder of unlimited master's papers. Farrier had not turned a hand for Roberta. He, Donivan Stevens, had gone nearly bankrupt for her. What right then had Farrier to intrude? Why did Roberta allow it—*encourage* it?

And yet, it did not seem to be the stowaway's fault. So far he had displayed indifference. In fact there were times when he was scarcely polite to the girl. Stevens turned the thought over and over in his mind until the strange truth dawned. Farrier's apathy was his one asset. *Indifference!* That was the secret.

Stevens watched closely; then decided to employ the tactics of his rival. He would stand aloof—be distant, cold. He would forget his personal appearance. He would never shave; never trim his mustache or, better, he would rid himself of it altogether. He would be subtle—sly.

He tried it.

Roberta saw him growing more hopeless every day. He was a sight. And when he finally discarded his bushy red mustache she went below, feeling very sad. Why had he done it? Perhaps his heart was breaking. Perhaps life was nothing to him any more. It was her fault. He was broken—disintegrating. She pitied him.

Then she thought of Farrier. She would never speak to him again—*never*—or at

least not till he spoke first. Then she would shun him. She could not forget how the conversation of the previous day had resulted in his glorious victory.

"I don't know why," she had said, "but for some reason I keep wanting to call you by your first name. I think of you always as *Dick*." There had been a silence for a moment. Then Roberta had added: "Do you know, it seems I've known you for years?"

To this Farrier had replied: "Yes, it does seem a long time."

But this much of it could be overlooked, so she had carried it further with: "Let's use first names. Would you like to?"

"Oh, it's all right with me," he had answered; "but, by the way, Miss Newmiller, what *is* your first name?"

That was all. And furthermore it was enough. Farrier had known her Christian name as well as he had known his own. It was bald insolence and she was furious.

Why was it that he was such hard clay to mold while Mr. Stevens, twice Farrier's size, could be twisted about her little finger? She had shunned Stevens and he had come to her, pleading. She had given Farrier every encouragement—egged him on—yet he had practically ignored her.

There was only one thing left to do: reverse the tactics—shun Farrier and encourage Stevens. She dreaded the thought, but her pride was at stake. A recent manifestation of feminine power, the force of which she could not help but realize, had been slighted—slighted by one who, from all outward appearances, was a stowaway—"dust of the shipyard," her mother had called him. From now on she knew her course. From now on she would fight. His lordship, the hawse rat; Tarry Dick, Earl of Merylswood—who was he to forget her first name; to be so—so high-handed, self-sufficient?

Thus resolved, Roberta staked her all on the last solution. She was to be an actress and she planned a comedietta in which Stevens was to play the lead.

Her opportunity came on the following night. The *Aggie* was running before a fair wind, the moon beating its whiteness on the sails. The setting was perfect and her chosen audience, Farrier, was standing wheel. Stevens of course was on watch. He stood in the shadows now, but she would soon have him "upstage" and in the limelight.

Roberta entered demurely from the companionway encountering Stevens, who met her with icy indifference and passed nonchalantly to the opposite rail. She paused thoughtfully in the moonlight. Perhaps Stevens would return. Yes, she was sure he would. He was returning now. She heard his great boots thumping the deck. She turned her head slightly. He had stopped. He was staring into the binnacle.

"What's your course?" he growled turning toward the wheelman.

Roberta smiled. She knew her presence had prompted the remark.

"Sou'west, a quarter west, sir," replied Farrier.

Stevens grunted, glanced at Roberta and swaggered aft. Roberta wandered alone up and down. There would be nothing to do for a while.

Later on, by some minor coincidence, Roberta found herself abaft the wheelhouse face to face with Donivan Stevens. He muttered a gruff salutation and would have moved forward again had not Roberta checked him with a prompt comment on the "perfectly wonderful night."

"Huh! Bit of a squall I smells," returned Stevens emptying the ashes from his pipe.

"Look!" cried Roberta pointing eastward. "Isn't that a vessel over there? See her running lights?"

"That? That's Mars, the planet. Mars always carries runnin' lights. Afraid o' runnin' foul Vee-nus, I takes it."

And so the little skit opened. It might have been entertaining enough, but Donivan Stevens was an actor only in make-up. His purpose was real. Farrier could see them plainly in the nearly warm radiance of the tropical moon, and the windows aft were open, making the dialogue equally perceptible.

If Farrier was the audience he was an unwilling one. He was like some timid person at a circus watching the lion tamer put her head between the animal's jaws. But this was worse. The lion Roberta teased was untrained. He had spent his life in the freedom of the wilds and had not forgotten their primitive laws.

There were many things Farrier liked about Roberta. If beauty had been her only asset it would have sufficed, for hers was the beauty of radiation rather than reflection. Beneath the crude mask of sophistication emanated a warm glow of childlike inno-

cence. And, after all, she was only a child —a child with a bright and shining toy which was new to her.

Farrier was wishing that she would again seek him as her playmate. He would play the game for the love of the playing, while Stevens, he feared, would claim stakes—real ones. So while Roberta baited her hook for Stevens the blood of the wheelman tingled with something more than anxiety.

"Maybe that's why they named the planet Mars!" Roberta was saying. "Isn't it strange: Venus was a woman, and she subdued Mars, the greatest warrior of the gods!"

"I ain't surprised at that," replied Stevens. "What chance does an elephant stand against a mouse?"

Roberta was silent for a moment; then: "I think you're a cynic, Mr. Stevens. What do you know about women?"

"Nawthin' at all, miss. Show me the lubber what does!"

"Are we as enigmatic as all that?"

"Huh!—well, no. I don't go so far as to say that about no woman. But they do go down by the head and likin' t'yaw at times."

"You mean you can't handle them?"

" 'Tain't as if I was tryin'. Most times all you got to do is set and wait. Then they generally comes back and trims off proper by 'emselves."

Roberta remained for a moment silent; then: "Life is very interesting, don't you think so, Mr. Stevens?"

He stared at her fixedly but did not reply.

"Each day is like a picture in a book. Each page brings something new."

Stevens continued to stare. "Yep, it does seem kind o' that a way now while you're sayin' it."

"Do you never look at the moon just as it peeps up from the horizon," continued the girl, gazing far away, "and wonder if it will find you as it had expected? It always seems anxious to climb higher to see how things are faring; and later, just as if all had been well, it sinks with a glow of satisfaction, leaving the rest for the sun. Sometimes when things are not as peaceful as they might be it hides its face in the clouds —cries sometimes, and teardrops fall in rain."

Still Stevens did not answer. He was glaring hungrily into her eyes—eyes now turning away. He did not hear what she was saying—only a far-away music, drawing nearer and nearer, becoming louder and louder, until it burst upon him with the mad blaring of trumpets and booming of drums.

As if it were still a part of the play the moon hid behind clouds and the raindrops fell. Roberta moved back. Stevens started to speak, but his words were smothered in the softness of her cheek as he whirled her up and held her fast in his arms.

"No, no!" she was gasping, struggling to free herself.

"You can't leave me! By God, you can't!" cried the mad sailor.

For Farrier there was blood on the moon and the ship bore down before a rising squall without a helmsman.

Another second and two men were rolling together on the deck, tearing at each other with the fury of rabid wolves. Roberta stood back clutching her cheeks in terror. Farrier was light and sinuous. He twisted about like a terrier under the fangs of a bloodhound. Once he was bent back and strangling over the taffrail, but he broke free and struck home with all the force that was in him. Stevens smiled back disdain, but the blow he offered in return was sidestepped and the two met in a clinch.

The ship lurched and weighed heavily upon her beam. Both men lost footing and fell, puffing like porpoises. Once Stevens' fist crashed down, nearly shattering itself on the hard deck. Once Farrier's arm shot upward spending its energy in air. Once both managed to rise and square off, but once again came the clinch and they fell.

Farrier forgot what the fight was for—forgot Roberta and himself. The fight, and the fight alone, boiled in his veins and urged him on. He did not feel the blows he received. He saw nothing but the eyes of his enemy and cared only for victory.

At last Stevens, reaching for a sharp-pointed "fid," lost his balance and the other came puffing to the top. But Farrier's strength was dwindling, and Stevens had found not only a weapon but a second wind.

Farrier put his remaining strength to the armed fist, but it lasted only an instant. Stevens' arm broke free and the fid shot forth like an arrow. Farrier threw himself forward and felt only the heavy jolt of an arm upon his shoulder and the point of the weapon bearing lightly on his back. He laughed savagely and returned a downward thrust, striving meanwhile to wrench away the weapon. But his efforts worked against

him. Stevens cursed with determination, freed his arm and struck. Again he missed his aim but drilled Farrier to the bone through the left armpit.

The oaken cone was like iron, burning hot. Farrier groaned and hit the arm that held the fid. He struck thrice with his right, tore free but stumbled and fell forward to the deck. Stevens would have pinned him there, but Farrier rolled to one side, staggered to his feet and climbed the steep slope of the deck to meet his adversary.

Stevens was waiting. He regarded Farrier no longer as an enemy but a victim. The fight was his. He stood laughing, brandishing his fid as he would a dagger. But he did not see the new light in Farrier's eyes nor the belaying pin in his hand—not until it was too late.

The iron pin fell true and the fid clattered to the deck. Stevens stood growling like a wounded bear—hands together, fingers distended like claws. Farrier drew back to swing again, but the instrument glanced on a fist which met him squarely on the jaw and sent him staggering. But the realization of a last opportunity, and a favorable list of the vessel, saved him. Before Stevens could follow one round blow with another Farrier swung again and the other fell heavily before the belaying pin.

Tarry Dick groped his way forward and sprawled over the companionway, panting and staring wildly at the moon. He heard men's voices and felt a gentle hand upon his shoulder. But for him the curtain had fallen and Roberta's little one-act skit ended with the frenzied throbbing of cymbals.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A ROUGH ESTIMATE

SENATOR SMOOT, of Utah, is one of the bulldogs of the Federal treasury. He is always on the job against extravagance with the people's money; and one of his hobbies is that too many clerks are employed in the executive departments of the government, with the result that many of them loaf instead of earning their money.

One afternoon he was discussing the general subject of government employees with the owner of a New York department store.

"How many people work in the Federal treasury department?" inquired the New Yorker.

"At a rough estimate," replied Smoot, "I should say about two-thirds of them."

ATTENDING TO BUSINESS

HAROLD B. SWOPE, the landscape architect, likes to play checkers and frequently has a rubber with an old gentleman who runs a country store near Swope's Florida home. The playing is done in the "back room," away from the commercial atmosphere, and of the two the old man invariably is the more absorbed in the game. With him checkers is a passion.

One afternoon, when the merchant was cogitating plans to invade the "king row," Swope, hearing footsteps in the outer room, told him:

"Colonel, there's a customer in the store."

"Sh-h-h!" the old man whispered, a finger to his lips. "Keep quiet! He'll go out in a minute."

Little Amby

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Ladies Present," "Summerhold," Etc.

When "honor rooted in dishonor" stands, the result of a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip may depend on the contents of the cup

HIS name was Ambrose Hinkle; his law offices were in a little house on Centre Street, across the way from the Tombs, which is the New York County prison.

Prisoners of the Tombs, if they looked from the narrow windows, could see the golden letters of the sign on the roof of the little house. If they looked out after dark, they saw the sign shining with characters of fire. The great prison is never still; it gathers them in, by night as by day. The little house set over against it was never dark.

Process servers, law clerks, marshals, professional witnesses, gunmen, private detectives—they were free of the little house at all hours. They went in and out of it on business, or leaned against its inner walls smoking bad cigars under flickering gaslights and waiting for something to turn up and grumbling together out of the corners of their mouths.

Taxis drove up; out slouched potentates of the underworld, gamblers, gang leaders, drug dealers, all the controllers of illicit industry. They swaggered into the little house, elbowing people aside, masking their fears under bold fronts. Fine automobiles stopped; captains of business walked into the little house, Wall Street men, ladies drawing sables high about their faces.

Punctually at nine in the morning came Little Amby; until the stroke of five he sat in an upper chamber overlooking Centre Street, mulling over the story of crime or misfortune which a client then sitting in the room with him had just told.

He was a dapper little fellow, wearing always pointed patent-leather shoes and a brand-new race-track suit. He loved diamonds; he wore a sparkling ring on every finger, except the thumb. His black hair was parted in the middle, with a part as clean-cut and unchanging as a sword scar. His eyes were large and alert and velvet black; their habitual expression was not unkindly, though they rarely smiled—it was rather an expression of quick understanding without ready sympathy. From his appearance he could have been a race follower, a gambler, a familiar of the city after dark, and as a matter of fact he was all three. He was also the first criminal lawyer of his time.

Men who knew him, brother lawyers, have said that he knew no law; Little Amby would have shrugged his narrow shoulders at the imputation, with his faint and peculiar smile. He got his clients off, and if that is not the business of a lawyer it is at least supposed to be by the clients. It is all most of them care about. Burglars and murderers do not thirst after law and justice, as a rule.

He knew all the law he needed to practice in his way; no deep or extensive reading of case and precedent is necessary to beat a case "on the facts." If "Black Mike" is accused of committing mayhem, in that he assaulted one John Jones at seven p. m. on a day certain in Battery Park, throwing said Jones to the earth and biting from him his ear, Black Mike's lawyer need only produce a convincing witness or two who will swear that he was walking on that day certain with Black Mike across One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street when he chanced to raise his eyes to the clock outside Frankenheim's jewelry store and noted that it was exactly seven p. m.! How could Blackstone or Coke improve on a defense like that? Or if Smith is sued by Robinson for five hundred dollars loaned by Robinson to Smith in the presence of two witnesses, why lose time and temper trying to prove the witnesses liars, or argue about the statute of limitations, or draw inferences from the Rule in Sheeley's Case? Admit that

Robinson's witnesses are telling the truth, and produce four witnesses who saw Smith pay the money back to him!

I have been under difficulties in writing this story of Little Amby. For twenty years he was a public character in New York City; and while there is a vast amount of material concerning him to be had, it is almost entirely a matter of public record in the *Law Reports*, each case being set out as a meager syllogism with nothing of the human story disclosed. And because of the nature of his practice nothing more of the stories will be volunteered by the parties who know them best. There are pretty ladies not a mile from Broadway, and millionaires within a bomb's throw of Wall and Broad, who breathe less easily at a mention of Little Amby.

People agree that he was good to his mother. I laughed when I heard that first; it was just such a first line of defense as Little Amby would have thrown up for a client caught red-handed. But it was true. For all his Tenderloin nights and scheming days he never forgot the old lady, but maintained her to the end of her days in a style which enabled her to treat with condescension the best people she had known when she was a lone widow on New York's East Side. It's not much of a defense, and if it's stale in the jury's ears by now, Little Amby has himself to blame.

There's not much more that I can think of to his credit. Except that—well, he did have his point of honor!

I'll illustrate that with a certain story, for want of a better. That is the trouble in writing of public men: their great moments have all been exploited, and if we must write of them we are driven to snapping up unconsidered trifles.

He came from the gutter, Little Amby. He sold newspapers, carried messages for the Western Union, got along somehow.

I find the first authentic record of him when he was a law clerk in the office of an ex-magistrate named Helwell. This Helwell was a political blatherskite, who got on the bench because he was a good fellow to his friends, and lost his job for the same reason. I am judging him by a brief of his which I examined; it is full of wind and bad law, and was probably supplemented by a private appeal to the judge, as Helwell got the verdict.

Little Amby joined Helwell's club, the Cuyahuga, and got himself before the public by making political speeches from wagons. The public was very fond of political oratory in those days, and would go a long way to get within a stone's throw of a speaker. Little Amby did well as an orator, because of his eloquence or because of his affording a poor mark to a partisan from the other great and glorious party. For pay he received references and occasional lean receiverships.

He seems to have gone along about as not a few young lawyers do, who have to eat even if they break a code of professional ethics compiled by old men who have all the good business.

He advertised in the newspapers, agreeing to get a divorce for anybody for a hundred dollars. For thirty-seven dollars he agreed to form a corporation as tight as the Standard Oil, and deliver it complete and running, with seal and stamp and stock book and ledger, the minutes of the first meeting and a resolution duly seconded and carried appointing Ambrose Hinkle counsel to the corporation at a yearly retainer. He offered to collect tradesmen's accounts for ten per cent, plus costs.

Plus costs. I have found one case—*Hemmerdinger against McGrory*—where his ten per cent charge was fifteen dollars for putting a poor man and his wife out of a cold-water flat, and you should see the bill of costs which he presented the landlord in that case. The exact amount slips my mind, but I remember my impression that it would have been a fair and reasonable charge, perhaps, if he had dispossessed the couple from the Garden of Paradise.

In those hungry days his favorite musical instrument was the ambulance gong; very faithfully he visited the injured in hospitals, to persuade them to sue. In our times we have workmen's compensation acts, and employers' liability, but in those days injured men were largely dependent on just such as Little Amby to get any redress at all. If the victim was really hurt he sued uniformly for ten thousand dollars, which is a thumping sum and calculated to make the defendant take notice and talk settlement; if the patient was only "sick, sore, lame and disabled"—which is a legal way of saying more scared than hurt—he sued for twenty thousand dollars on the theory that his client's nervous system was shat-

tered. It must be recorded that he always found a physician to swear expertly to the damage.

He was still a very young man, as years are counted in the law business, when he abandoned civil practice entirely and devoted himself to the criminal side.

People would think more kindly of criminal lawyers if they would stop to consider the moral risks of the business. It is true that some of the most eminent practitioners have closed their careers by going to jail themselves. They must expose themselves to contamination, as physicians do. It is a commonplace that physicians die of the diseases in the treatment of which they specialize.

A criminal lawyer is the adviser of criminals. Often he is their friend, for criminals are sometimes human beings with lovable points. He must save them from justice, or lose his practice. Even when he knows that they are guilty he is entitled to defend them, for they must be found guilty by due process of law, which presupposes vigilance on their behalf.

Little Amby came to Centre Street, opening his office in the very shadow of the lifted sword of Justice. He took to the trade like a duck to water.

More gently than a sucking dove he could roar into the unwilling ear of a complaining witness to induce him to withdraw a complaint. In harrowing colors he would paint the sad ruin which the complainant was about to visit upon this poor boy, Little Amby's client, and upon this poor boy's innocent wife and children.

If the complainant hardened his heart the wheels of justice lagged. Little Amby would put the law's delays through all their turns from a preliminary inspection of the minutes of the grand jury to a sudden adjournment taken in the midst of the trial itself—if things were going badly—to take the testimony of a material witness in Mexico. He won and won, and there rallied to him that troop of alibi establishers, eyewitnesses, defamers, perjurers, suborners, impersonators, intimidators, peepers and squealers, which made the shabby house on Centre Street terrible to honest people.

I want to call your attention to some things in the case of *People against Bumstead*, wherein Little Amby appeared for the defendant. I have the story behind this case.

The charge against Bumstead was grand larceny. He was loan clerk for the Drovers' Loan and Trust Company and, as such, he was in charge of the collateral left with the company by borrowers. He was indicted and tried for stealing three thousand dollars' worth of Third Avenue Railway bonds.

His defense, in substance though not in form, was that the bonds had been stolen by his assistant, a young man named Stacy B. Duryea.

He did not say in so many words that Duryea stole the bonds; if he had said so his assistant would have denied it. Little Amby contented himself with proving that Bumstead and Duryea were the only clerks having access to the bonds and that Bumstead was not the man who stole them. He left it to the acumen of the jury to name the thief.

Here is an extract from the stenographer's minutes—Little Amby is cross-examining young Duryea:

Q.—You have heard the defendant testify that he was never alone in the vault; will you contradict him?

A.—No, sir.

Q.—He testifies that you were with him on every occasion when he was in the vault. Is that true?

A.—I believe so.

Q.—Did you ever see him take securities from the vault?

A.—To bring them upstairs on order, yes. It was my duty to check the securities every time they were moved.

Q.—It was your duty to watch the defendant to see that he did not steal the securities, wasn't it?

A.—Well, sir, I don't like to put it that way, though, I suppose——

Q.—Don't beat around the bush. It was your duty?

A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—Did you ever see the defendant take any securities, except on order?

A.—Well, sir, I can't exactly say that I ever saw him take them, though, really, if he didn't take them I can't imagine——

Q.—No slurs or innuendoes, please. Now, Mr. Duryea, were you ever alone in the vault?

A.—No answer.

Q.—Well?

A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—To remain alone in the vault was against the rules of the company, wasn't it?

A.—No answer.

Q.—Well? Don't answer if it tends to incriminate or degrade you.

A.—It was against the rules, but I had to stay alone to finish the work on several occasions. One day he wanted to go to the ball game, and another day he had a date, and so on.

Mr. Hinkle.—I move to strike all of the answer out, except the words, It was against

the rules. For some mysterious reason this witness is trying to saddle the blame on this poor boy, but we'll have the truth out of him yet if not in this case then in another. A man might leave his office for a better reason than to go to a ball game, and another man might stay behind for a worse reason than to do the work.

District Attorney.—Speaking of slurs and innuendoes——

Mr. Hinkle.—Oh, very well. If the district attorney wants to protect this witness from a fair question I'll go no further. I'm through questioning him. (Sits down.)

The jury was out only long enough for a short smoke, and then brought in a verdict of "Not Guilty." Bumstead walked out of the courtroom and into Centre Street beside Little Amby, a free man. He was a tall and pimply faced man who had been brought up in a juvenile home which was really a prison for the young. He hadn't done anything to deserve incarceration in the home, except that he had been an orphan and friendless. He had the repressed manner of a prisoner, and his superiors in the trust company had mistaken this unpleasant characteristic for natural depth and reserve, and had advanced him to a responsible post. He had made an excellent witness, colorless but careful.

Little Amby had taken a fancy to him, in the way of business.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked, shaking Bumstead by the hand and slapping him on the shoulder for the loungers on the steps of the Criminal Courts to see.

"Look around for a job, I suppose."

"The three thousand is all gone, eh?" chuckled Little Amby. "Tell you what you do! Come around to see me after lunch. I think I can put you to work. So long!"

Little Amby went over to Lavelle's rathskeller on Broadway, and after his usual leisurely and ample midday meal returned to his office.

He sat in his upper chamber, smoking his after-luncheon cigar. He had no thrill of victory, but merely a sense of mild satisfaction. The trial just concluded had chanced to come in a slack time, else he would not have bothered with it but would have delegated it to an admitted clerk. Of course, there was the prestige; the bonding company which had had to stand the loss had done its level best to convict Bumstead, and it was worth while to balk them. Other clerks might take heart of hope and lay bold hands on their employers' money, which would make profitable business for the little house on Center Street.

But Little Amby was not thinking of the case at all. If one could have peeped into the advocate's mind at this time he would have seen a picture of half a dozen horses coming into the stretch at the Jamaica track. With his mind's eye Little Amby was watching a black steed nosing to the front; he was considering nothing more legal than an addition to his racing stable.

He smoked his cigar to the butt, took down his clasped hands from behind his sleek head and pressed the buzzer.

The clerk who was in charge of the room where the clients waited nodded to a fidgeting young man to indicate that his time had come. The young man sprang to his feet, ran to the door of Little Amby's private room, jerked open the portal and closed it from the inside with unintended violence. He was panicky.

"Here, here!" grumbled Little Amby. "What in thunder ails you?"

"Mr. Hinkle," breathed the youth in an agonized whisper. "Mr. Hinkle!" He approached the desk fawningly and tried to lay his hand on the lawyer's sleeve.

"Get away! Sit down—no, sit down there!"

Little Amby knew his clients. Most of them were scoundrels, and had the greater admiration for him for his brusqueness.

"Well?" he growled. "And who the devil are you?"

The young man stared at him affrightedly. "Why, you remember me, Mr. Hinfile. I'm Duryea, Stacy Duryea, the assistant loan clerk of the Drovers' Loan and Trust Company. I testified in that case this morning!"

"So you did," nodded Little Amby. "I got you now. Well—what is it?"

"Mr. Hinkle, I didn't take those bonds. Honest, I didn't! I swear I didn't! You don't believe I took them, do you?"

"Who did? Bumstead?"

"I think it was Bumstead!"

"The jury thought different," said Little Amby gravely. "Of course, it may be that you're right and they're wrong. But what do you come here for? You don't care what I think. Is anybody accusing you of stealing the bonds?"

"Why, everybody will think I stole them now! It was Bumstead or I, either one of

us, wasn't it? And now Bumstead has been found innocent. What else can they think? I spoke to Mr. Condie a few minutes ago—he's manager of the banking department—and he turned his face away from me. He thinks I'm a thief! What will they do to me, Mr. Hinkle?"

"Are you under bond?"

"Fidelity bond."

"You're going to be arrested and indicted, that's what," said Little Amby. "The bonding company is going to try to fasten this thing on somebody and make an example of him."

"Mr. Hinkle!" implored the youth. "You must save me from that. I can't face it—I can't! I didn't do any wrong—I'm not a thief, Mr. Hinkle!"

"No?" Little Amby allowed himself an amused grin. "That's a question of law, my boy, and you may find the court will differ from you. But what do you want me to do about it? You want me to take care of you? Is that the idea? Very well. How much money have you got?"

"I have three hundred dollars in mortgage certificates. I can cash them in at their face value and give you the money."

Little Amby pursed his lips and shook his head smilingly.

"Not enough," he said.

A carpenter was at work behind the tall bookcases which covered one wall of the room. He was tearing out the partition, to throw the small room beyond into Little Amby's office. He was making much noise. The lawyer stepped into the hallway and to the door of the small room.

"Go away," he said to the carpenter. "Come back to-night. You're a nuisance."

The mechanic gathered up his utensils and departed. Little Amby reëntered his office and shut the door behind him.

He looked thoughtfully at the loan clerk.

Stacy Duryea was a nice boy, but an intellectual lightweight. He was only a cog in the trust company machine. In great metropolitan institutions the work is so subdivided that any clerk's part of it is likely to be as meaningless in itself as an odd piece of a jig-saw puzzle, though the work of all the clerks is so nicely joined and articulated as to present the strange phenomenon of a thinking mechanism. A marvelous extension of machinery into so-called brainwork awaits the day when white-collar men cease to be the cheapest grade of labor.

But Stacy's troubles here were genuine, and might well have daunted an abler and more rounded man. Little Amby stood looking out of the window, with his back to the room. He flung a question over his shoulder.

"Can you still get at the collateral?"

"Why—if you mean am I still in charge of the collateral—yes! I have not been suspended as yet, though it may come when I return to the office."

Little Amby walked to his desk, seated himself, and joined the tips of his smartly manicured fingers.

"No doubt you have considered your position," he began enjoyably, "taking it, for the purposes of this interview, that you did not steal the bonds. You are going to be sacrificed for the good of the community; it is necessary to fasten this crime upon some one and punish him, to put the fear of the law into other responsible clerks. Your own common sense tells you that you are the logical victim; the fact that you did not steal the bonds is quite beside the question. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to fight, or are you going to let them make you a scapegoat?"

"I'll fight!" cried Stacy.

"That's the talk," said Little Amby, slapping him on the knee. "And with brass knuckles, too! Hit them with all you got, and to blazes with the rules! That's how I fight, and mighty few of them want any of my game. When they're looking around for a set-up they pass up Little Amby! Now I tell you what you do, my boy. You go back to that company, and go right down to that vault and take fifty thousand dollars in good and negotiable bonds and put them under your coat, and walk out! Get them up here to me and I'll guarantee that you'll never even be arrested."

He sat back and nodded encouragingly.

"What do you mean?"

"You speak English, don't you? They can jail you right now, and it won't cost them an extra dollar. But if you do what I say they will leave you alone, or they'll lose fifty thousand—as you will understand when I've explained. And the bonding company, too, will think it over very seriously if their example of theft is going to cost them real money. Catch the idea? I'll handle the negotiations for you."

"I won't do it," said Stacy, sitting up in

indignant surprise. "I tell you I won't do that!"

"Suit yourself," said Little Amby. "Go to jail, then. But don't take up any more of my time; I refuse to handle your case."

Stacy remained sitting in the chair, his fists clenched.

"What will happen to me?" he whimpered. "What will become of me?"

"I'll tell you," said Little Amby. "First, you'll be arrested, of course. Your employers will call in the man on the beat and you'll be marched out of the Drovers' Loan and Trust Company like Bumstead was, with a hand on your collar.

"Then you'll be haled before a magistrate for commitment. You'll be lined up in the police court with the scum of the gutters of New York, drunks, pickpockets, dope fiends, and so on. After the crowd in the courtroom has gaped at you and your new comrades to its heart's content you'll be locked up in a station house until you can get a hearing. After the magistrate's hearing you will be held for the grand jury, who will in due course indict you for felony. As you have no money to give bail you will lie in the Tombs, and while there you will be handled like a wild beast in the zoo; if your friends come to see you they will have to talk to you through bars, and will not be allowed into the same room with you—not even your mother. You will then be given a trial at Special Sessions, which is one of the sights of New York, and after you have shamed and disgraced all your friends and relations by making them testify to the years that they've known you you will be found guilty! The judge will address to you scorching words for having let this innocent man, Bumstead, take the original blame, and then they will take your pedigree, and you will be remanded to the Tombs again for sentence."

"No, no," cried Stacy, with starting tears. "I can't go through that! I can't! I'll kill myself first!"

Little Amby patted the clerk on the knee.

"Don't go through it, then. Take your chance while you have it. An hour from now it may be too late! Do you know what it is to be a convicted thief?

"You have now the respect of all who know you. When they meet you they take your hand, and look you straight in the eye and smile. Your mother's face lights up when she hears your step—you are her darling boy. You are young; your life is before you, to make what you will of it, if only you don't make a mistake now! If you take my advice the matter will be hushed up forever. The bonding company won't act in a hurry. As for your employers—well, after settling the case—as I can assure you they will—they will never dare to whisper a word—for by settling the case they will have committed the crime of compounding a felony. You will not suffer in mind for want of their good will for they will be felons themselves!"

"But what if they refuse? What if they have me arrested anyway?"

"Pah! You will have ample funds for your defense, won't you? And if you are convicted you will have put away a sum of money great enough to keep your mother in comfort until you are again at liberty, and enough to start life anew. But don't let us consider that. I pledge you my word that our plan will succeed!"

For several minutes Stacy Duryea fought the temptation in silence, while the lawyer waited. Then he spoke without raising his head.

"I'll do it," he whispered. "And may God forgive me!"

"That's the talk, my boy!" said Little Amby, clapping him on the shoulder. "You'll be out of your troubles before sunset to-day!

"And now for the best method of putting this thing through. It seems to me that you had better not come here directly with the bonds; you may be suspected and followed. You know my clerk, Cohen, outside? Yes, the man who was sitting with me at the counsel table in court this morning. He will be waiting for you in the main hall of the Woolworth Building in half an hour, and you can deliver the bonds to him. Then go home and wait to hear from me. You understand, do you? It's up to you to pick bonds that can be sold without trouble—if we come to that. What issues have you there that you can lay your hands on quickly?"

They discussed details for a few minutes. Little Amby did the talking, Stacy Duryea supplying only mumbled monosyllables.

Stacy rose and stumbled from the office, and felt his way down the worn wooden stairs of the little house, with his hands extended in front of him as though he were blind.

Little Amby instructed his clerk and then turned his crooked intelligence upon another affair. He was in excellent humor. He had decided the uses to which the bonds would be put. Thirty thousand would buy immunity for Stacy Duryea and twenty thousand would go to Little Amby for his services. He had made similar deals before and he believed that Stacy Duryea would be arrested and possibly convicted for Bumstead's theft if matters were not arranged as now provided for.

He was a rascal, because he had found that rascality worked out. That is why rascals exist, and it is our fault, and not theirs. If we are walking down a dark street and are accosted by two ragged fellows in turn, the first of whom tells us a likely story of misfortune while the second fellow offers to break our head, what will we do about it? If we give money to both of them the world has only broken even. But if we give the first fellow a dollar, and the second a punch in the nose, we have done our bit to abolish rascality by not letting it work out!

Little Amby went along very prosperously until he ran into some people who wouldn't have him on any terms, no matter what the cost. But that's one of the stories that are public property, and have been told and retold, and you probably read all about it in the newspapers. If you didn't, you can get the same thrill of vindicated virtue by picking out some flourishing rascal of your acquaintance and punching him in the nose. If I were you I'd pick a little one, about Little Amby's size.

He was engaged with another client when the clerk Cohen entered bearing a small object wrapped hastily in a newspaper. Cohen leaned over to his master's ear.

"The bonds," he whispered. "There was a boy waiting with them in the Woolworth."

"A boy?"

"Yes—some street kid. He said Duryea gave them to him. I suppose our friend was afraid to hang around the hall waiting for me."

"Probably. Put them over there in the safe."

Cohen put the package into the safe which stood in a corner of the room. Little Amby had resumed his conference with the client. He pursued his routine, checking off the name of each visitor upon his desk book. He saw clients only by appointment.

At a quarter to five he was done for the day; dusk had come, and the spreading bulk of the Tombs was darkening his windows. In the office buildings farther south lights were supplementing the fading sun, and lawyers bent unflagging over their reports, marshaling precedents for splitting hairs twixt south and southwest side. The falling shadows blurred the vision of no such bookmen in the little house on Centre Street. Cases were beaten here "upon the facts." The noble rows of sheep and calf which looked down upon impressed clients from the walls rested undisturbed, their tops beneath thick dust. It was Little Amby's familiar boast that he had not looked into a law book for years.

He picked up the telephone, and called up the Drovers' Loan and Trust Company.

"Let me have the secretary, please," he said. "Hello—is this the secretary? Ambrose Hinkle talking—the lawyer. There was a young man in here to see me to-day from your company. His name was Duryea, Stacy Duryea—do you know him? Yes, the assistant loan clerk. I wish you would come up here and talk to me about this young man. No, it won't be convenient for me to go down to see you—you had better come up here. It is about a loss suffered by your company, and I think I can be of some assistance to you. What's that? Assistance, yes—that's what I said. Assistance! How would ten o'clock to-morrow morning suit you? To-night?"

Little Amby frowned at his desk book.

"Well, if you'll come up right away I can give you a few minutes, but I'm going to leave here in any event at twenty after five. Are you coming? Good!"

He went to the safe and opened it and took out the package brought by Cohen. He held it a moment and seemed to meditate, and then tossed it back into the safe and spun the dial. If the appointment had gone over until the following morning he would have transferred the securities to a place of safe-keeping known only to himself, before interviewing the representative of the trust company.

His buzzer sounded. A clerk's voice came over the wire.

"Gentleman from Drovers' Loan and Trust Company to see you!"

"Send him in."

"Mr. van Lippe, isn't it—the secretary?" Little Amby did not rise from his chair when his caller came in, nor make any motion to

shake hands. He knew the secretary of the trust company by sight, having seen him in court during Bumstead's trial; but for strategic reasons he did not expose himself to a personal slight. Rather he offered one, as a matter of tactics. He went on the theory that men are either rascals or fools, and, as Van Lippe was fairly prominent in the financial life of the city, he was not a fool; he was then a rascal, and Little Amby knew how to deal with his own.

Van Lippe—clean shaven, pink, white-haired—bowed jerkily and unsmilingly and seated himself. Van Lippe's definition of mankind was not as clean-cut as Little Amby's; the secretary believed that it took all kinds of men to make up a world, but he had a very clear notion of the category which included Little Amby. The name almost came to his lips as he looked at the attorney:

"Swine!"

Little Amby leaned back in his swivel chair and toyed with his eyeglasses as he studied his visitor.

"Your Mr. Duryea was in here to-day to consult me; he finds himself in an awkward predicament, due to the fact that a number of valuable and negotiable securities which were in his charge are missing. I was very sorry to hear it—not only for his sake, but for the sake of the trust company."

"We appreciate your sympathy," said the secretary.

"Your Mr. Duryea impressed me as an honest and straightforward young fellow, in spite of this little slip, and I advised him to make a clean breast of the matter to you, and offer to make all the restitution he could and throw himself on your mercy. I think that's the only proper attitude to take in a matter of this kind, don't you? I told him that you would undoubtedly consider his youth and the great temptation to which he had been exposed. If I may say so, you gentlemen take a serious responsibility when you throw temptation in the paths of such young men. He tells me that the total loss will be something over fifty thousand dollars."

"Something over fifty-three," said the secretary.

"As much as that, eh? I am really very sorry—I want you to believe that. But, fortunately for all concerned, the young man is in a position to return the greater part of it. He lost considerable money in an unlucky speculation, but he can still restore thirty thousand dollars. If you are inclined to show mercy—and I am sure it would be very creditable of you to spare this poor boy and his innocent family from shame and disgrace—your loss can be cut to a maximum of twenty-three thousand dollars."

"I see," said Van Lippe. "The young man is willing to restore thirty thousand dollars of the stolen securities, but he has a string on the offer—that he shan't be prosecuted. That's it, in plain words, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't put it that way, Mr. van Lippe. I would rather say that all he is in a position to restore is thirty thousand dollars."

"I would," said the secretary, his blue eyes brightening. "I like to call a spade a spade! It is certainly a scoundrelly proposition. And how are we going to make this exchange of a promise of immunity to a contemptible thief for the return of part of our property? In the event, that is, that our directors regard it favorably?"

"Your word will be sufficient, Mr. van Lippe," said Little Amby. "It will be simply a gentlemen's agreement."

"A gentlemen's agreement," repeated the secretary. "That is how I am to present it to my board, eh? This is your proposition: thirty thousand dollars of the stolen securities will be returned if we agree not to prosecute the thief, but in no event will the entire sum or any greater part of it be restored?"

"You put the case in a nutshell," nodded Little Amby. "You will not fail to remind them that the poor boy has an innocent family, and that the securities are absolutely negotiable; so that the settlement may do equal credit to their heart and head."

"Very well," said Van Lippe, with a slight smile, "I give you my personal word that Duryea will in no event be prosecuted for his part in this affair. Is that sufficient?"

"That is amply sufficient," said Little Amby warmly. "It only remains for me to congratulate you, and through you your board, for the humanity you have shown. As the Bard of Avon said on a similar occasion:

"The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven——"

"Let Shakespeare rest for the time being," said Van Lippe, with a sudden grimness. "Tell your man to ask the gentleman who is waiting for me in the hall below to step up here!"

Little Amby looked searchingly at the trust company officer, but pressed his buzzer and gave the requested direction.

"I believe you know these gentlemen," said Van Lippe blandly, as the assistant district attorney entered who had tried the Bumstead case; with him was a detective from the central office.

"I have seen them before," acknowledged Little Amby, as watchful as a coiled snake.

"I'm afraid you've tripped up at last, Amby," said the assistant with satisfaction. "We have a warrant for you, for receiving stolen property. Grover here tells me that he's watched all exits from the building ever since your man Cohen brought in the stolen bonds. What do you say? Will you turn them over, or do you want us to look for them? There'll be a search warrant here in a few minutes."

"What bonds are you talking about?" asked Little Amby.

"Come, come—don't lose our time," said the assistant. He went to the door. "Send in Duryea!" he shouted.

Stacy entered the room, and stood beside Van Lippe's chair.

"Tell the counselor what bonds we are talking about," said the assistant amusedly.

"I couldn't do it, Mr. Hinkle!" said Stacy tremulously. "I took the bonds like you told me to and turned them over to the boy, but then I realized the awful thing I was doing. I don't care—I'll go to jail if they want me to—but I will not be a thief! I went back to the company, and I told them what I'd done. I couldn't do it, Mr. Hinkle—I simply couldn't!"

"That's the case," said the assistant, repeating the formula of an attorney who has put in his side and rests. "And now, will you please hand over the bonds?"

Little Amby whistled through frozen lips, masking his despair jauntily.

"I guess I'm licked," he said.

"Good," said the assistant. "There's one thing more. There's something I want to say to you here and now, and I want to say it in the presence of Mr. van Lippe, who is a party to it. If you'll open up and answer some questions we want to ask you over at the office, I'll guarantee that you get off with a suspended sentence. When I say that I'll guarantee it I mean that my chief will; I've consulted him, and it is his suggestion. If you'll work along with us you won't go to jail—until the next time; if you don't, we'll see that you get the limit and we'll guarantee you fifteen years. That's acceptable to you, Mr. van Lippe?"

"You may do as you think best," said the secretary. "I am sorry that you think it is advisable to let this scoundrel go unpunished, but you may use your own judgment."

"What is the nature of the questions?" asked Little Amby.

"Firstly, you must make a clean breast of this case, including Bumstead's part in it. You owe that to this boy here, Duryea. And secondly, which is more important, we want the truth out of you concerning a great number of shady transactions in which your office has been involved during a number of years past."

"You want the inside stories of the various cases in which this office has been engaged—is that the idea? Names, and dates, and particulars?"

"That is what we want, precisely."

Little Amby reached into a drawer, picked out a cigar, and bit the end off. He lay back in the chair, turning the unlighted weed over with his tongue.

"Fifteen years," he said reflectively. "You're too modest, Mr. Marx. I think, in view of all the circumstances, you might promise me twenty-five; that's a long time, a very long time, particularly to a man of my age. I was forty-five yesterday, Mr. Marx."

"Many happy returns," grinned the assistant.

Little Amby grinned amiably in acknowledgment of the ironical wish. He picked up the telephone.

"Hello! Is Heppelwhite there? This you, Bill? This is Hinkle. Say, Bill, I'm in a mess. I have the district attorney here, and he says he's going to put me in jail, and I shouldn't wonder but what maybe he is. Man of his word, Marx. I'll probably be arraigned up in the night court, and I want you up there to furnish bail. You'll do that for me, Bill? All right—so long!"

He put down the receiver gently.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I'm much obliged for your kind offer. I know what you think of me, and I know you expect me to jump at the chance. But I'm not going to do it.

"I'm as crooked as Pearl Street—you haven't got to tell me that. I know it. I'm a trickster who's up to every dodge. But you might have remembered that I've got

the largest criminal practice in the city of New York, and you might have known that I would never have gotten it if there wasn't *one thing* that Little Amby will never do! I have never broken faith with a client—never. And I am not going to do it now!"

He lit the cigar and walked to the safe. He opened it, took out the package, and threw it onto the desk.

"There you are, Marx," he said. "Look it over, and then come up to the court."

The assistant broke the string, and thrust aside the folds of the newspaper.

"Amby," he said, "you took it like I thought you would, and you have my respect for that. And I'm going to take your tip, as an expert, and try to get you the twenty-five years instead of fifteen! That's just what I said to the chief this afternoon. I said——"

He choked the words off. He was staring at the contents of the package. The contents were a bundle of neatly cut newspapers, and nothing else. His urgent gesture brought Van Lippe to his side, who scattered the papers hurriedly.

"What is this?" he cried.

"It's the package that Cohen brought here this afternoon," said Little Amby, his teeth closing through the cigar. "Perfectly satisfactory, I hope?"

"Too shallow, Amby," growled the assistant. "Bring out those bonds!"

"Don't talk nonsense," said Little Amby. "I'm not foolish enough to try to put a thing like that over on you. Search the house, if you like, but we are going to proceed just now on the theory that those are all the bonds you are going to find! Let's look at it from that angle. In the first place, if that is the package that Cohen brought here you have no case against me. Am I right?"

"I imagine so," nodded the assistant.

"Here's your man!" said Little Amby, pointing at Stacy Duryea. "He's admitted that he took the bonds from the trust company, and it seems that all he turned over to Cohen was that bundle. Am I right again, Marx?"

"If this is the bundle, you are," said the assistant.

"But he admitted to me that he had the bonds!" cried Van Lippe.

"I beg your pardon," said Little Amby. "I said that the young man had the bonds. So he has! You can swear to all I told you until you're blue in the face, Mr. van Lippe." He pulled out his watch. "Gentlemen," he said crisply, "I'll have to ask you to excuse me; I have a dinner appointment at seven, and I have to get home to dress."

"You'd better wait until we have a look around," grumbled the assistant, with little hope. He was convinced that the attorney had believed the bonds to be in the package, which made a search of the premises idle.

"Go to it, but be quick," said Little Amby. "Don't wait for your warrant—you have my permission to look around at once!"

He stepped out into the hall and called his managing clerk, Cohen. They whispered together. He reëntered the room with a vindictive light in his black eyes.

"Don't bother looking further, gentlemen," he said. "I've got some information about the matter that will clear up the mystery! Will you agree, Mr. van Lippe, to drop this matter, forever and a day, if you get your fifty thousand back? I mean, providing the bonds are not here, and providing I show you that I never had them? You must take this boy Duryea back into your trust and confidence—he's given you the best proof of his worthiness by trying to give your property back to you when he had already gotten away with it. You can't ask better than that! And you must drop any idea of bringing a charge of conspiracy against me, I don't give a snap of my fingers for the charge, and I wouldn't give you a dollar to drop it; but I'm willing to get the bonds back for you for my own private and personal satisfaction. Is it agreeable?"

"That is for the district attorney to say," said Van Lippe stiffly.

"Take it," nodded the assistant. "And for my part I'll engage that if the bonds are returned we'll take no action, unless compelled to by the trust company."

"Very well," said Van Lippe distastefully. "Your recommendation of Duryea bears no weight with me, but I have my own opinion of him. I believe that he is honest."

"A gentlemen's agreement," said Little Amby, with a flicker of the eyelids.

"A gentlemen's agreement," nodded Van Lippe, forced to smile. "I will call it so this time, Mr. Hinkle."

"Good! Here is what I have to tell you. My clerk tells me that I was overheard this

afternoon while making my little arrangement with Duryea. I am really ashamed of myself, but the conditions were unusual. I am making a little alteration here, and that wall behind those bookcases was knocked down to-day, so that everything said here can be heard in the adjoining room.

"While we were talking here our friend Bumstead entered the office outside. I had told the clerk out there that Bumstead had an appointment with me for to-day. The clerk knew that Duryea was concerned in some way in the trial finished this morning, and naturally supposed that Bumstead had come on the same matter, and therefore sent him in without announcing him. It is evident that Bumstead heard our voices, and slipped into the small room behind those bookcases to eavesdrop. When he had heard enough, he left the office, and prepared his plan to get hold of the bonds."

"But the boy who was waiting had a note from you," said the assistant.

'I shouldn't wonder; there's a desk in that room with stationery on it. Bumstead probably gave the kid a quarter to intercept Duryea, and later to give that package of clippings to Cohen. Nothing remains but to find Bumstead. That won't be any great job; I know all about him, his friends, male and female, his hang-outs. I'll lay anybody a fifty that I have him by the heels before to-morrow morning."

"I'll take that!" exclaimed Van Lippe.

They picked Bumstead up that night as he was boarding the Midnight Special in the Grand Central on his way to Canada, the land of the free. He had the bonds with him.

He went to jail, after confessing to both thefts on a promise of a recommendation to mercy if he'd save the county the costs of a trial. The bonds and Stacy Duryea went back to the vaults of the trust company.

And Little Amby, whom the Fates had reprieved this once in consideration of his single decency, came in another year to his inevitable hour, and—but that, as I have said, is an old story!

In the next issue appears "Who's Afraid?" by Mr. McMorrow.

EXPLAINING THE STYLES

COLONEL FRANKLIN PIERCE MORGAN, of Washington, D. C., the silver-haired possessor of a career famous alike for its identification with politics and its acquaintance with the fairest of the fair sex, was talking about the extremely short skirt now affected by women. The colonel was not altogether pleased with it. Still, he sighed, there was something to be said in its favor.

"The truth of the matter may be," he concluded, "that woman, being in politics, dresses the way she does just to show that she has nothing to conceal."

GOOD FOR LIVE STOCK

ALFRED P. THOM, now general counsel for the Southern Railway and one of the ablest railroad lawyers in the country, got his first training in this kind of work representing a road in Virginia. During his first year on the job he was amazed by the number of claims filed against the road by farmers for the destruction of cattle. There seemed to be hardly a man in that part of the State whose cow or steer had not wandered on to a railroad crossing and been struck dead by a locomotive.

After this had gone on for a long time, a ragged old fellow came in one morning claiming a hundred dollars for the death of a heifer. The price was out of all reason, and Thom knew it as well as the farmer. They argued at length.

"Oh, I see!" Thom burst forth at last. "Down here in Virginia nothing so improves live stock as crossing it with a locomotive!"

Bright Roads of Adventure

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "First Down, Kentucky!" "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six!" Etc.

Two hard-pressed filibusterers find time to listen to a genius

VI.—FAREWELL TO THE SWORD OF GOMEZ

THE weather was like the temper of General Emilio Nunez, stormy and overcast, for two or three days of this voyage of the good ship *Dauntless* to Cuba. She was a stanch sea boat and rode out the worst of it hove to, while the deck load of half-drowned humanity hung on by its eyelids and subsisted on crackers and cheese. For McCready and Paine it was not such an ill wind because the attention of General Nunez was thereby diverted from these two miserable objects of his wrath. And when the sky cleared, he, too, had ceased to be tempestuous. It was no longer necessary to contemplate walking the plank or being strung up to a derrick boom in lieu of a yardarm.

Rumor hinted that the expedition was to be landed on the coast of Pinar del Rio province, in the western part of the island, instead of another long cruise in the Caribbean to deliver the cargo to Maximo Gomez. The reasons for this change of plan were not divulged.

It seemed as though the escapade of the *Three Friends* and the failure of her voyage had hardened the resolution of Captain Johnny O'Brien. There was to be no more waiting offshore to make a final dash in the darkness. He was driving the ship straight for a destination.

It was early in a bright afternoon when the *Dauntless* turned into the wide entrance of Corientes Bay which is a little way below Cape San Antonio, on the southern side of the island. To us amateurs in maritime deviltry, this procedure seemed hazardous in the extreme. The bay was large enough to hold a fleet without crowding, a stretch of tranquil water supremely beautiful, with shining white beaches and feathery groves of palms. There was no sheltered anchorage for the *Dauntless*. From seaward she was boldly conspicuous, a vessel loitering where no steamer ought to be. A Spanish gunboat or cruiser passing outside would have trapped her beyond hope of escape.

The Cubans were packing their duffel to go ashore and once more all hands buckled to and lifted that everlasting cargo out of the holds. The heat was cruel, a blistering sun and no breeze! and, down below, the ship was an infernal sweat box, with all that weighty stuff to be moved. Several Cubans collapsed and were hauled on deck.

They showed pluck, these forlorn adventurers who had been so unmercifully hammered about by sea and land. They were tremendously admirable. One of them was an old man, or so he seemed to us youngsters, with his patient, wrinkled face, white mustache, and bent frame. In his worn, shabby aspect there was nothing heroic. He wore the remnants of a black alpaca coat and his hat was a grotesque ruin of a derby which looked as if it had been played football with. One of his sons had been wounded while serving with Garcia, and Spanish guerrillas had then tied him to a tree and chopped him to death with machetes.

This gentle old man had kept a little shop in Tampa until the love of country and the call of duty compelled him. He had been ailing while on No Name Key, and now he was shaking with malarial chills or flushed with fever. He stood on his thin, shaky legs while the Cuban major served out the rifles and ammunition before landing, but the doctor whispered something and the old man stood aside. He was pronounced unfit to land. He would surely die or be a burden for the others. They would have to send him back to Florida in the *Dauntless*.

He leaned over the rail, staring at the green shores of Cuba, tears running down

his cheeks. His hand fumbled with the tiny flag with a single star which he had pinned to his dirty shirt. The first man to console him was Sergeant Jack Gorman, the veteran regular who had seemed to be as tough as rawhide. But the tropical fever had gripped him also and he was in bad shape, trying to pull himself together, making a pitiful pretense of fitness for duty. The Springfield rifle was red with rust and he bragged no more of his marksmanship or told us how he had sounded the charge for the troopers at Wounded Knee.

Gorman would pick off no Spanish officers, at a thousand dollars a head, with slugs from that deadly old blunderbuss. Rolling up a fortune no longer interested him. He was too sick to care, and the doctor told him to stay aboard the ship. He took it with the philosophy of a man who had found life a hard road to travel.

"I'll hit the beach with the next outfit that comes over, boys," said he. "You can't lose Jack Gorman. I'll be there, with bells on, to help you lick them Spaniards to a frazzle."

"We'll wait for you, before capturin' Havana," replied Mike Walsh. "What will we be doin' for siege artillery unless you pack that old cannon on your shoulder, Jack?"

McCready and Paine had assembled their personal luggage, blanket rolls, saddlebags, canteens, and weapons, including the sword of Gomez, and were prepared to disembark with the forty-odd patriots. If it had been left to them, they would have preferred to land elsewhere than in the western end of Pinar del Rio province but they had to take things as they came. As has been said before, Captain Johnny O'Brien was concerned with matters more important than the convenience of his passengers.

The *Dauntless* was sliding into Corientes Bay when General Emilio Nunez beckoned the two correspondents to the wheelhouse. He had forgotten the harrowing episode of the yacht *Vamoose* which had so nearly wrecked a perfectly good filibustering expedition. His manner was friendly, even solicitous, as he began to explain:

"Pinar del Rio is not a good place for you. Here you will be four hundred miles from Gomez. You can't get to him—impossible! Antonio Maceo who commanded in the West is dead. General Ruiz has been captured. It is quiet, our soldiers are scattered, they will need time to reorganize. This cargo is to equip them while they wait for a new campaign—to show them they are not forgotten."

"Then you advise us to try it again, with another expedition?" I asked.

"That is my advice. We can send you soon in a ship which will carry men and arms to Gomez—to the coast where the *Three Friends* was driven away. The *Commodore,* I expect, will be ready when you go back to Florida."

McCready was perplexed and Paine was in a state of mind. The argument was sound enough but there was an equation overlooked by General Nunez. In sharing the perils and privations of these shipmates, particularly Mike Walsh, we had learned to feel that we belonged with them. To quit them was something akin to desertion. Blurred was the fact that we were in the employ of New York newspapers, paid to get the news and send it, under obligation to render the most efficient service possible, not as pirates but as correspondents. General Nunez answered an unspoken question when he went on to say:

"There will be little news to send from Pinar del Rio and no way to send it. And that beautiful sword with the diamonds, the sword of two thousand dollars, to cross the *trocha* with it—the Spanish barricade of forts and blockhouses and trenches—it can never be done."

It did appear a difficult journey to Gomez, several hundred miles and perhaps a hundred thousand Spanish troops betwixt me and that presentation to the commander in chief of *Cuba Libra.* McCready and I thanked General Nunez and retired for consultation. My diary mentions it as follows:

> A painful hour. Acute mental stress. Mac and I wavered and couldn't decide what was best to do. We were bound to be unhappy either way we played it. To prance into this jungle meant that we wouldn't be much use to our newspapers. It wasn't where we wanted to go. Our plans had been flubbed by that rumpus off the Rio San Juan in the *Three Friends.* On the other hand, we hated to quit our pals and they might think we had cold feet.

In this crisis we turned to Captain O'Brien for counsel and he also urged trying our luck in another voyage. Of course those piracy charges might put a crimp in filibustering out of Florida, said he, but there was more than one way to skin a cat and as long as the insurrectos needed the stuff, he would

try like hell to get it to 'em. This verdict ought to have clinched the decision but how could you be reconciled to parting from a comrade like Mike Walsh? There was a wistful look in those bold Irish eyes as he sidled up to ask:

"You an' Mac'll be goin' ashore with us? I'll feel fine if there's the three of us to be company for one another. Now that Jack Gorman has been took with chills an' fever, I'd be lonesomelike with nothin' but these Cubanos."

Again we wabbled in our minds. Mike was determined to invade Cuba even though this was a luckless jumping-off place. We were endeavoring to make the situation clear when, as was usual, the unexpected happened. Never was a ship less anxious to attract attention to herself than the *Dauntless* as she steamed two miles inside the wide harbor of Corientes Bay on this clear afternoon. Something went wrong with the valve of her whistle which suddenly bellowed a hoarse, tremendous blast, and it was a whistle with a voice for an ocean liner.

And it kept on bellowing while the engine-room force erupted madly from below with spanners and wrenches in their fists. The infernal whistle could have been heard for miles in this quiet air. It summoned the Spanish coast patrol to come and get this nefarious vessel, its cargo, its patriots, and Johnny O'Brien with a fancy price on his head. And while the whistle kept up its din, it blew off steam from the boilers and so diminished the speed of the *Dauntless* if she should have to run for it. Here was an incident which got on one's nerves. It was a complication which seemed superfluous.

They choked that whistle after a while and the vessel veered shoreward to find an anchorage and hustle out the surfboats. The Spanish navy had failed to respond to the stentorian invitation. It was the hour of the siesta. However, certain precautions were taken. A lookout climbed to the head of each stumpy mast and clung there with a pair of glasses. A hempen hawser was used for an anchor cable and in the bow stood a deck hand with an ax, ready to cut at the word. Chunks of resinous "fat pine" were fed into the furnaces or piled ready for an emergency.

It was rather ticklish work when the first boat pushed off for the beach a few hundred yards distant. The dense jungle ran down to the high-water mark and a regiment of Spanish troops might have been screened in this ambush.

But all was quiet. The landing was unmolested. There was nothing to indicate that any other human beings had ever set foot in this lush, tropical wilderness; not a hut or a clearing or a fisherman's wharf. It was as primeval as when Columbus had skirted the coast of Cuba. The boats were rapidly filled and sent away, with much shouting and splashing of oars. As fast as the cargo was piled on the beach, a gang of toilers moved it into the undergrowth where it was hidden from any passing vessel. A Cuban cavalry force was expected to arrive shortly and escort the precious store of munitions inland to the nearest village held by the insurgents.

The one-eyed Major Morales stood with folded arms in the shade of a palm and issued orders. The pose suggested Napoleon but the army consisted of these twoscore sea-weary patriots, undrilled, in motley garments, looking like refugees from a flood or a fire. But they managed to raise a cheer for *Cuba Libra* when they saw the landing made with no misfortunes; and the flag was unrolled to flaunt a bright patch of color above the tiers of boxes and bales and casks.

All hands aboard the ship labored mightily to clear the decks with the least possible delay. There had been a certain other steamer, caught on the northern coast with half a dozen boats plying to the beach. She had escaped but the Spanish man-of-war had raked the boats with shrapnel and some of them vanished in splinters and bloody whirlpools. It was not easy to realize, in this lovely blue harbor of Corientes Bay, that the *Dauntless* was taking a grimly sporting chance and winning it by sheer audacity.

During one of the trips to the beach I was wading through the gentle surf with a box of Mauser cartridges when Mike Walsh came along with a boatload of shells for his field piece and those bothersome cases of nitroglycerin for making dynamite. It was uncertain footing in the surf, with a rough coral bottom, and in spite of Mike's exhortations two patriots fell down with a box of nitroglycerin. He helped them ashore with it and remarked with that bland, untroubled grin:

"Looks like that stuff was no good, don't it? That bump ought to ha' touched her off. And it was bangin' all over the deck in heavy weather, more'n once. I figured on

blowin' up some Spanish railroad trains full o' troops."

"Thank God she didn't go off that time, Mike," said I, with feeling. "Please don't let them drop another box."

"Perhaps it might be better not to," grinned Mike.

We stood for a brief moment's breathing spell, looking out toward our ship in the bay. When I turned toward him again I caught the question in his eyes.

"Yes, Mike," I said; "it does seem as if McCready and I ought to go back in the *Dauntless* and try to land nearer old Gomez than this. I won't say good-by, though, for we must talk to Nunez again when we go aboard."

"'Tis a hard choice to make," reflected the experienced chief gunner's mate. "Only a fool will tell ye that the signal of duty is always easy to read. It ain't. Here I jumped the navy to lend these Cubanos a hand. Does it make me a blackguard or a hero? See you later. We've got to rustle this stuff."

Alas, there was to be no farewell to Mike Walsh. He was on the beach and we were on the *Dauntless,* as it happened, when the last boat left the ship. No sooner had it cast off than Johnny O'Brien shouted to the mate:

"All your hands aboard? Then let those boats go. We won't bother to pick 'em up empty. Cut that cable. I'm sort of anxious to get out of here."

The ship was surging ahead as the ax bit through the hempen strands. The Cubans in the last surfboat ceased rowing to wave their hats and yell bon voyage. On the white beach the rest of the company stood and watched the departure. Conspicuous among them was the strong, indomitable figure of Mike Walsh, a leader of men and a master of circumstances. Mac and I flourished handkerchiefs and then walked to the other side of the deck. We were unhappy beyond words. This last glimpse of Mike was like a poignant reproach. General Nunez broke into the gloom of the conversation. He was in excellent spirits. The enterprise had been highly successful. Again he assured us that we had done the right thing. He was buoyantly sanguine of getting us away in another vessel in a week or two.

"It's convincing enough," sighed McCready, "but I feel like a whipped pup."

"So do I, Mac, confound it. And the trouble is that we forgot we were newspaper men and the big stunt seemed to be to play it to a finish with our pals of the *Tres Amigos.* Nobody ever did find it satisfactory leading a double life."

And so we fretted and worried and failed to solve the problem while the *Dauntless* ran out of Corientes Bay in the dusk and sought that familiar passage around Cape San Antonio. A kindlier fortune had been vouchsafed this adventure and the vessel sped homeward in smooth weather and without pursuit. General Nunez and his aid left us outside of Key West harbor and the course was laid for Jacksonville. There were no alarms until the cruiser *Newark* was sighted at anchor inside the jetty of the St. Johns bar. Reluctant to answer awkward questions, Captain O'Brien hauled off to the northward to enter the river after dark.

Then, slipping in past the cruiser, he encountered the *Dolphin.* Both vessels let their searchlights play on the *Dauntless* but made no effort to detain her. They knew from experience that chasing a filibuster inbound would yield no evidence of crime. There would be no forbidden cargo as evidence. It was lucky that the cruisers took this for granted because the *Dauntless* had certain passengers who would have been rather difficult to explain—the disconsolate Jack Gorman and his Springfield rifle, the pathetic old Cuban with the derby hat, and the two hard-looking correspondents. That the vessel would be closely scrutinized by the officials in Jacksonville went without saying, and therefore it was arranged that these incriminating passengers should be set ashore a few miles below the city. Gorman and the sorrowful old Cuban were told where to find friends.

Captain O'Brien urgently advised McCready and Paine to dodge under cover and stay there. They would be entangled in the legal proceedings against the *Three Friends* and the deputy marshals were on the watch for them. Detention would mean missing the next expedition to Cuba and the fat would be in the fire. Paine had one of his happy ideas. Four miles below Jacksonville was a comfortable hotel, at Roseland, which catered to winter tourists. Here was the place to lie snug. As was enthusiastically explained to McCready.

"I spent a winter there with my folks sev-

eral years ago," I said. "The landlord and my father are old friends, and we can dig in as long as we want to. Nobody can find us. And a few luxuries will recuperate us a whole lot."

It listened well, agreed Mac, who confessed that all this chatter of deputy marshals annoyed him. Roseland would be a bully good refuge for two weary young pirates. At eight o'clock in the evening the *Dauntless* dropped us off in a boat. The correspondents walked into the hotel, leaving on the piazza their saddlebags, rifles, and so on. For lack of a mirror they had no conception of their forbidding appearance. Their big straw hats were cocked up in front, Cuban army fashion. Their clothes were torn and incredibly grimy, like their faces.

One of them had forgotten to slip a holster from his belt. The other had under his arm the sword of Gomez to which a machete was tied with bits of cord. Sun-reddened noses, a stubble of beard, and a furtive, guilty manner were details of the picture.

We were a brace of abandoned ruffians, from head to foot. Approaching the desk, we addressed a gentlemanly clerk, asking to see the manager. The clerk mumbled something and shied violently. He was suddenly pop-eyed. The manager was out for the evening. He was in luck, thought the clerk. You could read it in his face.

"Oh, well, I'll see him in the morning," was my easy reply. "Can you put us in a couple of rooms? We are not at all fussy."

"Not a room left, nothing whatever," gulped the clerk. "We can't possibly take you in. No use waiting."

McCready nudged me. There was a scraping of chairs in the large office or lounging room, the sounds of hurrying feet, of agitated exclamations. The guests were moving out rapidly. One or two elderly people were imploring the clerk to phone for the police or do something, quick.

"Are we as bad as that?" I implored. "Look here, Mac, we have touched off another panic, just like the *Vamoose*."

McCready was scanning a printed placard posted beside the desk. It informed the public that the Hotel Roseland was no longer a hotel but a sanitarium for nervous invalids in need of rest and skilled treatment.

"*For nervous invalids!*" chuckled Mac. "Could you beat it? A few of 'em are suffering a relapse. Come on, you old blunder head, before we get locked up for disturbing the peace."

It was an error, no doubt of it, this breaking in on these jumpy patients, but we dallied not to apologize. Darting for the piazza we caught up our baggage and vanished in the darkness. Apparently we were stranded on a lee shore.

"I can't go to one of the Jacksonville hotels, Mac. I know too many people in the town. Shall we camp in the woods until we can figure out the game?"

"Not me. I'm going to sleep in a bed if I have to commit murder. Let's trail along in and trust to luck. She has been a good friend of ours so far, in spite of your bright ideas."

Timidly we boarded a street car and were regarded with intense interest. If the other passengers did not point with pride, they at least viewed with alarm. Naturally I expected to meet some old boyhood friend or schoolmate. As the car left the open country and passed into the eastern end of the city, more people got on. A few blocks and we would be among the stores and hotels of busy Bay Street. The strain was breaking us. It was any port in a storm. McCready glanced out with a hunted air and spied a signboard on a corner. We clattered out of the car with our unusual personal property and fled into the saloon. In those far-off days men turned to such a haven when the world was against them.

Now those whose trade it is to write fiction are often accused of overworking the machinery of coincidence. Why, bless you, the coincidences of fact are stranger and more frequent than imagination ever concocted. Here we were, with our feet on the brass rail and a kind bartender reaching for a bottle of private stock when a voice droned aloud from a newspaper at a table in a corner:

> Havana via Key West.—It is known here that the steamer *Three Friends* has landed at Juaraco the expedition carried from Fernandina, and it is reported that Ralph D. Paine, the correspondent who was on the filibuster, has been captured and with three Cubans has been placed in the Cabanas fortress.

Somebody else disputed this, saying:

"That's not so. I'll bet you on it. Henry Fritot saw him in Key West, at Palacho's café, after the *Three Friends* came back. Henry's brother, Fonso, told me yesterday. They hid on a key somewheres."

"Maybe they did. I'd like to see Ralph Paine. We used to go duck hunting together out Trout Creek way when we were in high school."

Two feet slid off the brass rail. The kind barkeeper was left with the bottle in his hand and two untouched glasses on the mahogany. Having rehearsed an exit at the sanitarium, we were experts at moving the aforesaid feet. Before you could have blinked twice, we were out of that saloon. McCready breathed hard. He said he was far from rugged. Whither? We had intended asking the bartender. At this moment, when all seemed lost save honor and the sword of Gomez, there glimmered across the street, down by the river front, a rudely lettered square of canvas, with a candle behind it. The welcome words were:

LODGINGS, 25 CENTS.

We flew for this humble haven and found a frowzy woman who led us up a rickety flight of stairs to two chicken coops under the roof. There were cots in them. Next morning we found a side door of the saloon and a little back room where meals were served to order. A colored boy was sent with a note to Señor Huau in his cigar store, informing him where two hunted correspondents could be found when the next expedition was ready to sail. The messenger returned with a brief reply, instructing us to keep hidden and sit tight; Señor Huau was also thoughtful enough to send a bundle of newspapers. The *Times-Union* of Jacksonville had printed the document which the American government had drawn up in the proceedings against the *Three Friends* and her crew. The headlines were as follows:

THREE FRIENDS AS A PIRATE IS TAKEN—THE CUBAN STEAMER SEIZED AS SOON AS SHE ENTERED THIS PORT—SHE WENT TO SEA ARMED TO FIGHT SPANISH SHIPS—AT LEAST THAT IS THE CHARGE BROUGHT AGAINST THE VESSEL BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT—RALPH PAINE, MIKE WALSH, CAPTAIN LEWIS AND OTHERS ARE ACCUSED.

A steamer charged by the United States government with being a pirate entered port yesterday but instead of being an object of suspicion and hatred, was welcomed by the river craft and hundreds of citizens. The alleged pirate is the steamer *Three Friends* which tied up at the foot of Ocean Street. Before the vessel had been at the wharf half an hour, she was seized by the collector of customs of the port of St. Johns on instructions from the secretary of the treasury, and during the afternoon was taken in custody by United States Marshal McKay on a charge of piracy, the charge being made in a libel filed by Cromwell Gibbons, assistant United States district attorney, by direction of Attorney General Harmon.

The libel is a peculiar one and is the only one of its kind ever filed by the United States government against a regularly licensed American vessel, and while the charge is most serious the owners of the boat are not worried about the final outcome.

This prefaced the document itself which was long and foolishly verbose. It was not stupid reading, however, for the pair of refugees in the twenty-five-cent lodging house and they perused it with scrupulous attention, particularly these paragraphs, which were the nubbin of the argument:

THAT the said steam vessel, *Three Friends,* to wit, on the 14th day of December, in the year of our Lord, 1896, within the southern district of Florida and within the jurisdiction of this court at the port of Fernandina, was then and there by certain persons, to wit, John O'Brien, William T. Lewis, John Dunn, Henry P. Fritot, August Arnao, Michael Walsh, Ralph D. Paine, and divers other persons to the said attorneys unknown, heavily laden with supplies, rifles, cartridges, machetes, dynamite and other munitions of war, including one large twelve-pound Hotchkiss gun or cannon and a great quantity of shot, shell and powder therefor, and said vessel was then and there manned by fifty men in addition to the crew, the names being to the said attorneys unknown, with intent that said vessel should be furnished, fitted out, and armed for the purpose of being employed in the commission of piratical aggression, search, restraint and depredations upon the high seas, on the subjects, citizens and property of the King of Spain in the island of Cuba, and willfully and with intent to injure, and without legal authority or lawful excuse, to commit depredations upon the subjects, citizens and property of the King of Spain in the island of Cuba——

THAT the said steam vessel *Three Friends,* on or about the 21st day of December, while upon the high seas, in or about the neighborhood of the waters at the entrance of the San Juan River, in the island of Cuba, was then and there by certain persons, to wit, John O'Brien, William T. Lewis, John Dunn, Henry P. Fritot, August Arnao, Michael Walsh, Ralph D. Paine and divers other persons to the said attorneys unknown, was furnished, fitted out and armed with willful intent to commit piratical aggressions and depredations, and that said persons did then and there discharge the Hotchkiss gun or cannon mounted in the bow of said vessel, on a certain Spanish gunboat and that the persons being on the said vessel also discharged their rifles on the said Spanish gunboat, all of which was done willfully and with intent to injure, and without legal authority or lawful excuse, the

subjects, citizens and property of the King of Spain in the island of Cuba.

McCready read this aloud, in a sonorous voice, and commented:

"A good copy reader with a blue pencil could improve that stuff, but I'll admit it carries a punch. Your Mr. Hearst seems to be getting all stirred up about you. Listen to this shriek on the editorial page of the *Journal:*

"The United States government has announced its purpose to proceed against the Americans who took part in the naval skirmish between the filibustering steamer *Three Friends* and two Spanish craft in the Caribbean Sea last month as pirates.

"The penalty for piracy, it will be remembered, is death.

"President Cleveland has obliged Spain in many ways, has done all in his power to save a corrupt and venal monarchy from paying the penalty of the barbarous oppression of the Cubans. He has put the United States navy at the service of the Spaniards, and has trodden down the Constitution in order to balk the will of the American people.

"But when he undertakes to have American citizens hanged by the neck until they are dead because they beat off Spanish armed vessels, which sought to board their craft, he exceeds even his limit of power.

"The *Journal* does not question the zeal with which the Cleveland administration will strive to send these men to the gallows for the comfort of Spain, but it thinks the United States district attorney, of Jacksonville, will have to send to Alaska for a jury not absolutely certain to acquit the accused."

There was much other newspaper comment, in a more temperate vein, including interviews with the members of the committees of foreign relations in the Senate and House at Washington. And Mike Walsh, who was responsible for it all, was denied the pleasure of reading about it!

The news of most immediate concern to McCready and Paine was that the steamer *Commodore* had sailed with a cargo of munitions a few days sooner than planned, having found an opportunity to load and get away. Off the Florida coast, near Misquito Inlet, she had foundered in a heavy gale of wind. The *Dauntless,* homeward bound, must have passed over the scene of this tragedy soon after it happened. It was the *Commodore* in which we had hoped to make another voyage to Cuba, as advised by General Emilio Nunez.

Among the survivors was Stephen Crane who had sailed as a correspondent. He was a youngster then, only twenty-five, but a novel of his had been published in the preceding year and it displayed the rare flame of genius. It was called "The Red Badge of Courage," the story of the experiences and emotions of a boyish private soldier in the Civil War. Innumerable novelists of to-day, English and American, chant each other's praises and prattle about realism as though they had invented it. Few of them can write like Stephen Crane who blazed a new trail more than a quarter century ago.

To us two lugubrious sojourners in the kennel of a lodging house came a welcome visitor, Napoleon Broward, managing owner of the *Three Friends,* who had commanded her in several expeditions. Romance is not dead when such a career as his is possible. Big, two-fisted, stout-hearted and immensely competent, he had been a sea cook, fisherman, towboat skipper, wrecker, and sheriff. This filibustering industry made him a hero in the sight of the people of his native State of Florida. A few years later they elected him governor and he made such a good one that he was sent to the United States Senate where his ability won unusual recognition.

"It looks as if you boys need to be cheered up," said Napoleon Broward after listening to our tale of woe. "All this piracy holler will blow itself out. They can't hang anybody. No grand jury in Jacksonville will return an indictment carrying any penalty like that. Shucks! Folks would ride the jury out of town on a rail, and they know it."

"What will happen to the *Three Friends* and her crew?" anxiously inquired McCready.

"Oh, they'll be tried for breaking the neutrality laws, same as usual. I'm sick and tired of giving bonds for the vessel, and bail for Johnny O'Brien and myself and the rest of the bunch. But I won't be able to get the ship to sea, not for some time. The United States court is acting mighty mean and stubborn about it. They seem dead set on confiscatin' the *Three Friends* and sending all hands up the road for two or three years. Those busybodies at Washington talk powerful brash about piracy convictions and so on, but I reckon they got off on the wrong foot. The sovereign State of Florida wouldn't stand for hanging you-all, or any foolishness like that."

There was something soothing in the very appearance of this tall, broad, solid managing owner of the *Three Friends.* As the sheriff of Duval County, it had been taken

for granted that whenever a bad man ran amuck Napoleon Broward would go and tote him in, dead or alive. In the matter of this filibustering enterprise he seemed to regard trouble with the United States government as habitual.

He went on to mention that they had plastered another libel on the *Dauntless*, for taking the expedition off No Name Key, and she was tied up with deputies aboard and Pinkertons watching her, in behalf of the Spanish consul, like hound dogs with a possum up a tree. However, the owners hoped to habeas corpus her or replevin her or something like that.

"The government thinks you two boys are in Cuba," said he, "so there is no active search for you. All you have to do is hole in like you are and hope for things to break right. They can't prove their case unless somebody turns State's evidence. That's where we've got 'em by the short hairs."

With this Napoleon Broward departed to attend to his own complicated affairs which disturbed his massive composure not at all. On the contrary he rather enjoyed it, we suspected. For two days longer we endured confinement in that wretched lodging house which was not much better than a jail. Then a desperate mood impelled us to sally forth after dark and charter a cruising hack, imploring the negro navigator on the box to steer for a quiet place where a decent dinner could be ordered.

Yessuh, boss, he knowed jes' th' restaurant wid little rooms curtained off same as box stalls where nobody ain't gwine meddle in other folks' business. We dived into the musty hack and he flogged the bony steeds. The café was excellent, as it turned out, and we lingered in a comfortable seclusion. Two men were dining in one of the curtained alcoves adjoining and the voice of one sounded vaguely familiar to me. It was not identified, however, until he began to read to his companion something which was evidently in manuscript.

"Listen, Ed, I want this *right*, from your point of view," said he, during a pause.

"You've got it, so far, Steve," was the reply. "That's how it happened. Read me some more."

And now I knew who these two men were, Stephen Crane and Captain Edward Murphy of the lost filibustering steamer *Commodore*. Last to leave the vessel before she had lurched under, they had flung themselves into a skiff with the cook and an oiler. After struggling all night, they had been washed ashore in a heavy surf which had drowned the oiler. Crane's story, as he wrote it a few days later and as we overheard bits of it in the restaurant, was called "The Open Boat." It can be found in a book of his short stories bearing this title, and it is literature.

Hearing these two men discuss the mournful and terrible experience, made singularly vivid by the passages from Stephen Crane's story as he read them aloud to the fine young Irish shipmaster, made a deep impression on us:

> The injured captain, lying in the bow, was at this time buried in that profound dejection and indifference which comes, temporarily at least, to even the bravest and most enduring when, willy-nilly, the firm fails, the army loses, the ship goes down. The mind of the master of a vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her, though he commands for a day or a decade; and this captain had on him the stern impression of a scene, in the grays of dawn, of seven turned faces, and later a stump of a topmast with a white ball on it that slashed to and fro at the waves, went low and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his voice. Although steady, it was deep with mourning and of a quality beyond oration or tears.
>
> "Keep 'er a little more south, Billie," said he.
>
> "A little more south, sir," said the oiler in the stern.

A silence in the alcove and Captain Edward Murphy commented:

"The *Commodore* was a rotten old basket of junk, Steve, but I guess I did feel something like that when she went under. How do you wind the yarn up, when poor old Billie was floating face down and all those people came running to pull us out of the breakers?"

"This way," said Crane, and read:

> "It seems that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes, and flasks, and women with coffeepots and all the remedies sacred to their minds. The welcome of the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous; but a still and dripping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land's welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.
>
> "When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters.

"Do you like the stuff or not, Ed?" asked Stephen Crane.

"It's good, Steve. Poor old Billie! Too

bad he had to drown. He was a damn fine oiler."

When there came a lull in their talk, McCready and Paine pushed the curtain aside and made a party of it. Here were four of us, all in the same boat, as you might say, met by a singular chance, and veterans of all the vicissitudes of filibustering when you wove together those recent voyages of the *Three Friends* and the *Dauntless* and the *Commodore*.

Captain Murphy was a man without a ship, but he hoped to get another one and play the game again. Crane was never robust and there was not much flesh on his bones, at best. The shipwreck had weakened and shaken him. He had not lost his zest for adventure, but it was advisable to wait a while before attempting another voyage. His indifference to danger was that of a youthful fatalist and I was to see it displayed under fire in a later campaign.

It was midnight when we parted, an evening to remember, and McCready and I returned to the lodging house in better spirits. A day or so after that there came a telegram from the New York *Herald*, sent in care of Señor Huau. It recalled poor old McCready. Some word had reached the managing editor, probably from Key West, that he was not in Cuba where he was supposed to be. How could a nervous editor dealing out assignments in Herald Square be expected to comprehend the intricacies of filibustering? He had sent McCready to join the Cuban insurgents weeks and weeks ago and he wasn't there. And he was sending no more news. He had failed to deliver the goods.

"No use of my wiring explanations," sighed McCready. "Imagine trying to make it clear to Broadway. Here's where the combination busts, old man. And I did want to be among those present when you handed the sword to Gomez."

"I am still some distance from the big scene, Mac. What am I going to do without you?"

"Viva Cuba Libra! A la machete! Caramba! Piratos!" answered he, which sentiments seemed to do as well as any other.

It was a sad separation. That night I went to the railroad station in a hack with McCready, or as near as I dared approach the populous terminus, and bade him adios. He was more than ever a prey to anxiety at the thought of confronting the managing editor, and murmured that he felt both the yips and the fantods coming on. What a silly notion it is that youth is carefree and happy! Youth takes itself too seriously for that. It discovers that life is blighted every little while and suffers accordingly.

I was left to worry alone, which was much more distressing than worrying in partnership. No message of recall came from Mr. William Randolph Hearst. He had so many correspondents knocking about that one more or less made no difference and I was lost in the shuffle. Existence alone in that unspeakable lodging house soon became intolerable. It meant paying twenty-five cents a day for solitary confinement. A little more of it and I should have no lucid intervals at all. A wail for succor to Señor Huau brought the suggestion that it might be prudent to erase myself from Jacksonville entirely. There was a comfortable little hotel at Green Cove Springs, twenty-five miles up the river, where a fugitive from justice would be unlikely to find acquaintances.

To Green Cove Springs Ralph Paine promptly betook himself, changing his name and finding difficulty in remembering his alias when he visited the post office in quest of letters from the conspirators of the Cuban Junta, in Jacksonville. The prosecution of the *Three Friends* for piracy was hanging fire for lack of witnesses. You could not expect those honest sailormen to take the stand and confess to the crimes of which they were accused. Additional information from Havana stated, unofficially, that Mike Walsh's dose of shrapnel had swept the deck of the Spanish gunboat and that a dozen of her crew were in no condition to testify about anything. As the New York *World* shrewdly summed it up:

> According to the views of Senator Cushman K. Davis and other students of international law, the courts must first prove the offense of which the *Three Friends* has been guilty. Will the officers of the Spanish gunboat come to the United States to confess their own defeat and discomfiture? The newspaper correspondents will not testify because they are now with the insurgent troops in Cuba. Captain O'Brien and Captain Lewis have sense enough to keep their mouths shut. The crew are silent. They are not testifying against themselves. Although the Spanish Minister, Dupuy de Lome, may call the attention of Secretary Olney officially to the depredations of the *Three Friends*, his action will be merely a formal discharge of his ministerial duties. The whole episode is humiliating to

Spanish prowess and naval skill and courage. If the *Three Friends* had been captured or sunk by the Spanish war vessels, Spain would have had all the glory and no American citizen could make lawful complaint. As it is, the Cubans are delighted, the Americans are rather proud of the dexterity shown by the gunners of the *Three Friends,* and the Spanish are too disgusted to talk.

Although the ceremony of being hanged by the neck had ceased to be painfully imminent, there was every reason to conclude that the American government intended to put a stop to this business of shooting up the inoffensive Spanish navy. It simply wasn't done in polite international society. First thing you knew, Captain Johnny O'Brien might damage an expensive Spanish battleship or armored cruiser. And so the *Three Friends* and the *Dauntless* were tied up hard and fast and no excuse was plausible enough to free them. It was impossible, just then, to find other vessels suitable for this peculiar trade. Filibustering was in a bad way.

The days dragged into weeks for Ralph Paine, alias Ozro J. Clark, fidgeting and waiting at Green Cove Springs. And still no word came that a low, rakish steamer was ready to slip seaward with a freightage of munitions and patriots. At the end of a month of this irksome inaction, the prospect was no brighter. It was time to quit and admit to one's self that he had tried and failed. And failure hurts like a wound when one is too young to realize that life is strewn with thwarted ambitions, with vanished dreams of achievement. Yes, we had tried, McCready and I, but this made it no less ignominious in our own sight.

If this were fiction in the romantic vein, the glittering sword would have been carried to Gomez as the climax of the tale. The fact was that I had lugged the confounded bauble five thousand miles and had been scared almost to death several times, and now all that could be done was to turn Mr. Hearst's two-thousand-dollar gift over to Señor Huau, request a receipt for it, and wish him luck in getting it to General Maximo Gomez.

The sequel was distinctly amusing. Señor Huau, it seems, forwarded the sword to the wife of General Gomez in San Domingo and she kept it until she was able to rejoin her warrior husband, when Spain had been driven out of Cuba by American ships and soldiers. It is related that when the fiery old Gomez examined the sword, so splendid and costly and ornate, he exploded in one of his turbulent denunciations, this white-bearded, gimlet-eyed little man who was feared by friend as well as foe.

"Ah-h-h, it cost so much money? A trinket good for nothing: Would I wear it instead of my machete? Nonsense! The imbeciles in New York, with two thousand dollars to waste! It would have bought shoes for my barefooted men, shirts for their naked backs, cartridges for their useless rifles. Take it away. It exasperates me! If the *majace,* the idiot, who was sent on this stupid errand had found me in camp, I should have been tempted to stick him in the belly with his accursed sword."

This, I claim, was realism to suit the taste of the modern school of novelists, no happy ending about it and everything gone to pot generally. The only bright phase of the finish concerned Mike Walsh. He had reason to feel as happy as Pollyanna, for the report came through Cuban sources that he had blown up a railroad bridge and a Spanish troop train with it, in Pinar del Rio, and thereby earned swift promotion. That nitroglycerin of ours must have made a pretty fair article of dynamite, after all.

For years I sought to find some trace of this admirable Michael Walsh. The most creditable information was that when peace came to distracted Cuba he settled in a fishing village on the coast and found prosperity, organizing the community, of course, and lording it as a sagacious and benevolent dictator. He was a jewel of a man and his heart was pure gold.

Republics are not always ungrateful and in his old age Captain "Dynamite Johnny" O'Brien was liberally pensioned by the government of Cuba and died full of years and extraordinary experiences. At a dinner given in his honor, on his eightieth birthday, which was shortly before his death, President Menocal of Cuba was personally represented by Señor Victor Barranco who delivered this message:

"In Cuba's darkest days, Captain O'Brien's clear head, stout heart and steady hand guided the ships which brought the arms and ammunition to the patriots in the field. The pay was low and often came in driblets. The risk of imprisonment for violating the neutrality laws was great, and greatest of all was the risk of capture and death at the hands of the Spanish patrol

fleet. These dangers and sacrifices our brave and gallant *'Captain Unafraid'* chanced because of his innate love of liberty and his warm sympathy for a people struggling against tyranny. By direction of the president of the Republic of Cuba, your old companion in arms, I tender you, Johnny, for the Cuban people our renewed testimonial of affection and gratitude and our best wishes on this your birthday."

The legal prosecutions of the *Three Friends* and the *Dauntless* dragged along, hampered by lack of evidence to obtain conviction, until they were quashed by the declaration of war against Spain in the following year.

Long after that—twenty years later—I was making a voyage in a five-masted schooner out of Portland, Maine. She was loading coal at Norfolk and with her master I happened to be idling on the piazza of a shipping office which overlooked the river.

Outward bound there steamed past a long, powerful seagoing towboat painted white. Her appearance was familiar, even before I read the name painted on her stern, *"Three Friends, Jacksonville."*

She was a little too far distant to make out the figures in the wheelhouse but one of them was much like that of stalwart, bronzed Captain "Bill" Lewis. The *Three Friends* was like a phantom ship, conjuring memories of youth and high adventure and bitter disappointment. Stanch and faithful, she was still towing off the St. Johns bar or wrecking on the Florida Reef or pulling strings of barges coastwise, as far as Baltimore and Norfolk. A gallant ship with a peculiar distinction! She fought the only naval engagement of the Cuban Revolution and earned for her crew the honorable stigma of piracy on the high seas.

McCready is a substantial newspaper publisher in Canada and occasionally he comes to my New Hampshire farm for an earnest week of golf. Not long ago he had unlimbered an excellent brassie shot but after watching the flight of the ball he stood wrapped in meditation. Without any preface whatever he turned to say:

"What do you suppose Mike Walsh really thought, when we let him hop ashore in Corientes Bay without us?"

'You can search me, Mac, but I know I have waked up in the middle of the night to fret about it more than once."

In the following number Mr. Paine will tell about the adventures of the good ship "Gussie."

ANCIENT PROHIBITION

PROHIBITION had been tried in the White House long before the nation-wide drought struck the Wilson administration. Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes is the only president's wife recorded as refusing, prior to national prohibition, to have a drop of intoxicating liquor in the Executive Mansion. Incidentally, she is the only first lady of the land dressed in a wine-colored gown in the White House gallery of portraits of presidents' wives.

BENIGN ADVICE

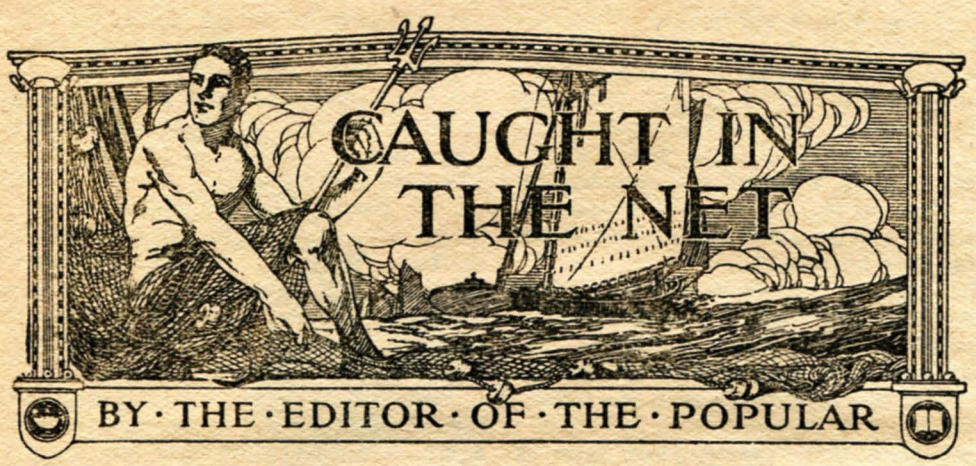
PRESIDENT HARDING is an unusually affable man. The ordinary run of callers, job seekers, and political hangers-on never seemed to worry him at all when he was a senator. There is record of only one occasion on which his suavity failed him.

The caller was a young woman obsessed of the idea that she could go into politics and, as Mr. Harding put it, "reform the wide, wide world," although to the most casual observer and the most careless listener it was apparent that she had neither the face, figure, nor mentality to influence anybody.

After explaining her ambition, she asked:

"So, senator, what do you think I'd better do now?"

"Get married," said Harding.



LONGER LIVES

WITHIN the last ten years or so official statistics have indicated that more people live to a good old age now than during the last century. Many centenarians are being found. Increased hygienic knowledge, the discoveries of the sources and the means to take to avoid many diseases and improved sanitation have saved many lives that fifty years ago or more would have been sacrificed. Many stories of individuals in remote towns or villages living to one hundred and twenty years of age or so and still in good health are regarded with suspicion by scientists. In most of these cases there is no written record or memorandum of the date of their birth and any estimate of their age is largely a guessing proposition. That the average length of human life in the United States has been increasing for some time, however, most scientists now believe to have been proved.

In a statement made very recently on behalf of the committee on elimination of waste in industry of the American Engineering Council appointed by Herbert Hoover it was stated that according to its findings the duration of human life in America has increased by five years since 1909. The committee reported its findings after an exhaustive investigation of the conditions in a number of industries. The report says that an economic gain of many millions to the nation through lessened disability and sickness has been shown.

It is estimated in the report that 2,400,000 people are continually ill. Tuberculosis is still the worst epidemic disease, though its ravages are decreasing. Government and State action is advised in suggestions in an elaborate program to minimize illness and prolong lives.

A large number of different diseases and disabilities, including defective eyesight to which some employees in industrial workshops and factories are subject are discussed in the report at considerable length in connection with methods of providing against and counteracting them. The investigators declare that while there is no reason to believe that the race is physically advancing, the national vitality is undoubtedly increasing.

Most scientists and prominent physicians now believe that the duration of human life is increasing on the whole. At the present time a surprisingly large number of people, men and women, look and feel younger than their actual age. People over sixty and sometimes over seventy years of age are often found to be as active mentally and bodily as many are when they reach the age of forty or fifty. These young old people include some bank and railroad presidents, inventors, prominent business men and several well-known high government officials not only in the United States, but in European and other countries.

AMERICAN TREES FOR WAR'S WASTE

SINCE the late war the European countries which have been the theater for its destructiveness have had to depend a good deal on the resourcefulness of this country for means of repairing many kinds of damage by the armies of Germany and the nations aiding her. This has tended to strengthen the friendly relations between this country and its allies in Europe which have been growing since the war, as they did during it.

One of the latest kinds of damage in repairing which America is aiding the European nations is the destruction of trees near cities and in hundreds of thousands of acres of forest land. In France and Belgium American seedlings have been planted in war-wasted areas and have even now the prospect of becoming mighty trees. Not only are these seedlings being nurtured in France and in Belgium, but also in Great Britain and Ireland. Great Britain actually lost more forest cover than any other country by the sudden demands of war for materials. Trees had to be cut down remorselessly by the thousands for carrying out war plans.

Very recently, after a three months' inspection of the plantings, a report was made by Arthur Newton Pack of Princeton, N. J., to the American Forestry Association which supplied the seedlings. In his report he says the trees everywhere in the war-wasted lands, which are now growing from American seedlings, are regarded as growing monuments to cordial relations between the allies in the great war. It is announced that the seedlings have been planted in Belgium in the beautiful Ardennes region where the Germans left nothing standing. In this district the picturesque American Douglas fir, with many other varieties of trees, is now appearing. The report also shows that the American seedlings have been planted along the Chemin des Dames, around Lille and Valenciennes and Hirson, in the forest of Saint Gobain and in the Mormal forest, where in 25,000 acres all the mature trees were cut down by the German ax. Many other European districts, rendered a treeless waste, where American seedlings are being planted, are described. Each nation seeking this aid, including Great Britain and Ireland, will require 14,000 pounds of seedlings a year for some time, the report says.

By far the larger portion of the seedlings sent by the American Forestry Association to England many months ago were dispatched to Ireland, where they were raised in nurseries in County Tyrone and have made a surprising growth. It was stated that nearly every tree-growing country in the world will now have to furnish its share of seedlings. These countries include Austria, Holland, Poland, Servia, Italy, Corsica, Japan and even Germany. Last but not least, the United States and Canada will continue to do their potential share in aiding the work of reforesting ravaged areas.

THE NEW IDEA IN PARKS

A PARK used to be a collection of flower beds bordering a plot of more or less well-kept turf growing a bumper crop of "Keep off the grass" signs, the whole surrounded by a high, spiked iron fence and guarded by a policeman. Some city parks are like that still. Of course, they serve the purpose of providing breathing places for dwellers in the crowded districts and spots of green to rest eyes tired of brick and stone and asphalt. But to provide real recreation present-day park commissions have a better scheme; they create their park on the outskirts of the city—perhaps out of the city, but close enough to be reached easily and inexpensively—and then use the newspapers to tell the people how to get to it and what they will find there. Uncle Sam started the style in 1872 when he set aside over three thousand square miles of America's most glorious scenery to create Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming—a real playground for the nation. Now we have nineteen national parks, with a total area of almost eleven thousand square miles—and we doubt if there is a "Keep off the grass" sign in one of them. Rules, of course, there are, but they are the sort of rules that any right-minded person is quite willing to obey.

All of these national parks but one—Lafayette, on the Maine coast—are west of the Mississippi River, and most of them are a considerable distance from any of our larger cities. However, the efforts of our national government have been well seconded by State,

county, and city park commissions, and opportunities for outdoor life can be found close to many of our great cities. Interstate Palisades Park, where one can make an excellent imitation of a wilderness camp and smoke a pipe beside a camp fire within sight of New York's skyscrapers, is an excellent example of this new kind of park. It runs from a point opposite the upper end of the city some miles north along the Hudson River, includes the famous Palisade cliffs, and comprises 36,000 acres. In the northern section of the park there is country wild and rugged enough to interest even the veteran wilderness traveler. During the summer of 1920 more than 800,000 people visited the section nearest the city, and 52,000 women and children from New York's poorer districts enjoyed an eight-day vacation at a camp maintained by the commission. Walking clubs and Boy Scout troops have taken full advantage of the playground, and the commission has cooperated with them in cutting trails and erecting shelters in the wilder parts of the park. Other large cities have similar recreation places. In Maryland, within easy traveling distance of Baltimore and Washington, the State board of forestry encourages campers to make use of the beautiful Patapsco Forest Reserve, and even issues permits for the erection of semipermanent cabins, thus placing a country home within reach of the man of modest income.

Did you say that your State offers no such advantages? That's a little your own fault. Tell your representative at the State capital what you think about it. It's your State, you know.

FUTURE IMMIGRATION

THOUGH our restriction of immigration was adopted only as a temporary measure the question is increasingly shaping itself in the public mind as to just how temporary it should really be for our own good—or, to put it more accurately, as to just how far restriction should be removed. In fact authoritative students of the subject have come to believe that continued severe restriction of immigration, in a properly discriminative way, is necessary to prevent deterioration of our very civilization. Our long complacency with ourselves as the melting pot of the world is being considerably shaken, enlightened modern opinion inclining to the belief that we do not really "melt" much in any very beneficial sense. Put in another way, it is denied that certain race stocks are poor entirely because of poor environment in the Old World and eugenists assert that education and better economic conditions in this country only imperfectly overcome ingrained racial and family defects.

"Put three races together," said Professor H. F. Osborn at the recent International Eugenics Congress, "and you are as likely to unite the vices of all three as the virtues," and added, "We are engaged in a serious struggle to maintain our historic republican institutions through barring the entrance of those who are unfit to share the duties and responsibilities of our well-founded government." In his conviction that mixture of poor stock with good does as much harm to the good as it benefits the poor all who spoke on the subject at the recent congress concurred. Doctor C. B. Davenport, Director of the Eugenics' Record Office, has suggested that amendments should be made in our immigration laws enabling researches to be made into the family history of candidates for admission into the United States in order to bar tainted lines.

The fact of the matter seems to be that there is nothing so stable as the germ plasm on which heredity depends, a stability which, in the three great racial branches—the Caucasian, the Mongolian and the Negroid and their variations—makes for a stubborn permanence to types, both in respect to "health" and "character," and for a survival of original qualities in racial admixtures.

All of which, of course, does not mean that no immigration should be allowed. But, in a country like ours where the total of foreign born has come to amount to 13,920,000, it does seem strongly to point to the wisdom of closely watching how we add to this considerable proportion of foreign strain in our midst—some 13 per cent of the whole. These figures show a net gain of over 400,000 in foreign-born population over those for the last previous census in 1910. Immigration during the war, of course, was comparatively small. What we have to note are the figures for such a prewar "normal" year as 1913, when the total of alien arrivals was close to a million and a quarter—

over a quarter of a million of whom, incidentally, could neither read nor write. To be sure, there was emigration from our shores, in the same year, of something under a million. But even so our net increase in aliens was 200,000 that year. And besides, the exchange of souls was to our disadvantage anyway—the newcomers being "green" material obviously harder to assimilate than the partially "digested" emigrants who left us that year.

In a word our task of "melting" is normally an immense one—presupposing it to be possible to any great extent at all. If to a great extent it is impossible, as modern opinion tends to believe, our situation is just so much worse and calls for radical measures. In any event, the conclusions of the International Eugenics Congress regarding our future attitude to immigration seem well worthy of carefulest consideration.

MORE WORKERS

A GOOD proportion of the residents in the United States have usually been under the impression that those who do not earn their living, including women and children, outnumbered those who work. This might appear at first to be a logical belief. In families the husband and father was supposed to be the breadwinner of the family unless in exceptional cases, and children were looked on as not likely to be workers unless they had reached at least legal working age.

In a recent report from the census bureau at Washington, however, it was stated that on the basis of the census of 1920 the total number of persons of both sexes in the United States engaged in "gainful occupations" was 41,609,192, or over 50 per cent of the population above ten years of age. In the total number of workers during 1920, 33,059,793 were males and 8,549,399 were females.

The largest percentage of workers was found to be in the District of Columbia, where the number of workers was 62.6 per cent of the population over ten years of age. Nevada showed the largest percentage of workers of any of the States, the number of workers in that State being 58.8 per cent of the population over ten years of age. The number of workers in the State of Connecticut was 589,816, or 54.2 per cent; in New York State, 4,504,791, or 53.6 and in the State of New Jersey, 1,310,379, or 52.5. The State of North Dakota was at the bottom of the list, showing a percentage of 44.

In the census for 1910 there seems to be a smaller proportion of workers, compared to the present time. This is supposed to be partly due to the change in the season for taking the census—that census being taken in winter, when the number of rural workers was at a minimum.

Of late, however, there have been more avenues of work for women than a number of years ago. Numbers of women are working now in some vocations formerly monopolized by men and some lines of employment at which both men and women formerly worked are now almost monopolized by women. This would necessitate some of the men seeking other work and would mean more workers in that other work on the whole. Child labor has increased in the meantime and there are more kinds of employment at which children can work than formerly. A number of women, too, are working now who in past-gone time would have been dependent on their husbands altogether for support.

POPULAR TOPICS

JAMES W. GERARD, former ambassador to Germany, upon his return from a recent trip to Mexico, said that our southern neighbor was recovering from its years of civil war and that under the leadership of President Obregon—"one of the strong men of the world"—the Mexican people will achieve peace and prosperity and predicted that the republic's relations with the United States will be friendly. Mr. Gerard expects that before long American capital and enterprise will be playing a big part in the upbuilding of Mexico.

THE often-repeated advice to "own your home" has been followed by nearly half the families of the United States, 28 per cent of American homes being owned free from incumbrance, and 17 per cent being owned but mortgaged. Among cities with populations of 100,000 or more, the distinction of having the largest percentage of home owners goes to Des Moines, Iowa, where 51.1 per cent of families are their own landlords. Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a close second, with 50.1 per cent of its families equally fortunate. In New York City as a whole only one home in eight is owned by the family living in it, although in some of the outlying boroughs the percentage of home owners rises as high as 42.

AMERICANS spend over two million dollars a day to see motion pictures, says Chairman Hurley, of the Chicago motion-picture commission. He adds that we have 16,000 movie theaters, with a total seating capacity of 5,400,000.

MAKING money is the job of Mr. Raymond T. Baker. Although he makes it for Uncle Sam he works as hard as if he was making it for himself. As director of the mint, in charge of the manufacture of all our metallic money, Mr. Baker has become so expert in the various operations that he can hold his own with the highly skilled workers employed in our three mints. Not long ago he put in a twenty-four-hour day in the rolling room of the Philadelphia mint, working eight hours with each of the three shifts.

JAPAN has 200,000 more women than men. The empire's total population, according to official census figures recently published, is almost fifty-six millions, of whom 18 per cent live in cities. Tokyo, with a population of 2,173,000, is the largest city, but its population has decreased by almost two hundred thousand in the last three years. Osaka is the only other city with more than a million inhabitants. The average Japanese family consists of five persons.

RICE production in the United States has increased tremendously in the last few years. The 1920 crop amounted to almost fifty-four million bushels, valued at above $63,000,000, as compared with 1904's crop of twenty-one million bushels, valued at about $14,000,000. This increase in production is reflected in our rice exports, which for the first eight months of 1921 amounted to about 435,000,000 pounds, 42,000,000 pounds more than for the entire record-breaking year of 1920. Germany was our best customer. The effect of increased production is shown also by a 55 per cent decrease in our imports of rice for the first eight months of 1921, as compared with the corresponding period in 1920.

MANUFACTURERS of motor-car wheels are having some trouble in obtaining enough hickory to make the sixty-five million spokes they need annually. According to forest-service reports we still have almost sixteen billion board feet of this wood standing, most of it in the Central States and the lower Mississippi States, but the price is increasing and the stands are becoming more and more inaccessible and difficult to log. As eighty per cent of our motor cars use wood wheels with hickory spokes, and as hickory is the wood most in demand for tool handles and the shafts of golf clubs, it seems that the present large demand for this wood will increase and that extensive planting would be both wise and profitable.

FOR the fiscal year ended June 30th last, ships flying the American flag carried 39 per cent of our exports and 72 per cent of our imports, figured on a tonnage basis. Although the Shipping Board owns 50 per cent more tonnage than do private companies, its ships carried only 22 per cent of our imports and only 19 per cent of our exports.

"Love Powders and Dragon's Blood"

By Robert McBlair

Author of "Apology Accepted," "The Whisky Bottle Baby," Etc.

When you have finished this story you will want to shake "Fish" Kelly by the hand

"FISH" Kelly in his distress sought out Lawyer Little. And Lawyer Little, rotund depository of colored wisdom, furnished the key. Lawyer knew a man who knew a colored lady, who worked for a white woman, who knew another colored lady, who knew a man who was an Egyptian from Egypt. His head was wrapped in silk till it was as big as a watermillion. The toes of his red shoes curled up till they touched his baggy silk trousers. A black cat with fiery eyes sat on his right shoulder and told him what happened by day. An owl sat on his right shoulder and told him what happened by night. The Egyptian from Egypt never ate and never slept. Jes' sat in a dark room lookin' into a big glass ball. In that ball he saw everything that happened. You could dig a hole in the ground and kivver yourself up. He could tell you de color of yo' necktie jes' de same.

Fish had wormed his way through the intricacies of Lawyer's directions and now stood before the door of the fearsome yaller man from Egypt. The house was one of a row of dilapidated, wooden dwellings on Fenchurch Street. Although the other houses showed the animation of kinky heads, black faces and the whites of eyes, this house was silent and foreboding. Green shades covered its windows and the glass panels of its peeling door. Nailed to its yellowish clapboards was a hand-painted sign. Fish couldn't read the words, but the pictures of bears, bulls, stars, and serpents were sufficiently alarming. Hollow-eyed from three days of worry, the sweat streaming from his black face to his retreating chin and prominent Adam's apple, his long, skinny frame positively trembling, Fish crept up the four sagging steps and knocked timorously on the door.

For some moments there was no answer. Fish was about to yield to his impulse to flee, when he observed a movement of the green curtain on one of the glass door panels. The curtain slowly raised. It disclosed the startlingly black head and vivid green eyes of a cat. The cat stared at Fish for a moment; then the curtain lowered again.

"Feet do yo' duty!"

Fish turned and crept noiselessly across the porch. He had his foot on the first step when he heard the door open suddenly behind him. He remained with his foot on the first step as if paralyzed, afraid to look around. He jumped violently when a hand grasped his arm.

"You wish consult me?" asked a voice with a peculiar accent. "Come this way."

And Fish felt himself urged across the porch, through a dark hall and into a darker room, which smelled of Chinese punk and onions. In the dimness, the tall, spooklike outline of the conjurer guided him to a table. Fish was pushed into a chair, and the Egyptian from Egypt sank into a chair opposite. He switched on a lamp which threw a green circle of light onto the table between them. A black cat leaped noiselessly from the floor to the table and thence to the Egyptian's shoulder. In the added illumination Fish saw on the other side of the man's turbaned head a small owl, its luminous eyes wide and staring.

"Let me see your hand," said a hollow voice. And, after he had examined Fish's long, black trembling member: "This is bad. Worse than I had expected. This is terrible!" He pushed Fish's hand away as if his peering soul could no longer stand the horrible things it saw. "You had better tell me all you know," he sighed. "Leave out nothing."

Fish blinked his prominent eyes and moistened his lips. He had trouble enough, but it would make a long story. His mind was too paralyzed with dread to be fluent. So he made it brief.

"They's a gal I wants to"—his receding chin quivered—"to love me. An' they's a man, a big man, I wants to cast a spell on."

The truth of it was that Fish had come home three evenings before in fine good humor with the world. Mr. Clinton, his burly "light-complected" father-in-law, was in the parlor and Fish had asked him to lend him his pack of ten beagle hounds to hunt rabbits with the next day.

For answer, Mr. Clinton swung a right hook to Fish's left eye, knocking him head foremost into the rubber plant. With luck and speed Fish managed to get a table between himself and his robust parent-in-law in time to avoid annihilation. While Mr. Clinton, with murder in his eye, circled the table in pursuit of his daughter's husband, Fish gathered from his violent monosyllables the cause of his anger.

Even Fish had to admit that Mr. Clinton was justified. It seems that, some time before, Fish had come home late and inebriated and, having lost his key, had climbed in a second-story window. A nurse was sleeping in that room, and her screams had aroused the household. Fish had fled to his own room and jumped into bed and pretended he was asleep. It was therefore concluded that the intruder had been a burglar, especially as Fish had taken an oath before the family that he hoped the Lord would strike his wife and new-born baby dead if he was guilty. And Mr. Clinton, having found footprints on the lawn the next morning, had apologized to Fish for having even suspected him.

Well, to make a long story longer, a new neighbor next door had been up all night with a teething baby. She had seen Fish climb in the window and had seen him later make the footprints on the lawn. On the morning of the day Fish asked the loan of the beagle hounds, she had innocently spilled the beans. There was an accumulation of irritations between father-in-law and Fish, and this was all that was needed to cause Mr. Clinton to attempt mayhem.

While Fish circled the parlor table, one jump ahead of eternal life, he kept one popped eye out for an avenue of escape, the other out for Macedonia, his wife. Ever since she and he had come to live with her parents, Macedonia had been the single buffer between him and his parental enemies. At the eleventh lap, with Mr. Clinton still a length and a half behind, Macedonia, her glossy hair high coiled above her yellow oval face, appeared in the doorway.

When she saw her devoted husband, she cried: "Here de man what wished my baby daid!" Then she picked up an expensive china vase and smashed it upon Fish's thick but sensitive head.

When a man's wife is wrought up to a point where she will break her favorite vase against him, it is time, Fish decided, to leave home. His decision was strengthened by the crash of another vase as he dashed through the front door, and by the last words of father and daughter, spoken in unison: "I sees you ag'in an' I cuts yo' heart out!"

The Egyptian from Egypt cleared his throat. "A love charm is ten dollars," he intoned hollowly. "A curse is fifteen dollars." Then he added, rapidly running his words together so they sounded like a real promise: "Results-guaranteed-no-money-refunded."

"I ain't got but twenty dollars."

"With you?"

"Yas, suh!"

"Give it to the spirits and I will see what can be done." The man with the turban reached into the darkness and with a quick movement placed a human skull on the table. "Push it through the right eye," he directed, "and say these words: 'Hashem, doem, golem.'"

If any suspicion had lurked in Fish's mind that his adviser was not in league with the spirits of darkness, it was entirely dispelled before his trembling fingers had thrust the four five-dollar bills through the right eye of the late lamented. He was ready to believe that the yellow gentleman could snap his fingers and turn the glare of noonday into nighttime with a moon and stars. He sent up a silent prayer of thanks that the voodoo man was on his side and not on Mr. Clinton's.

The gentleman from Egypt, who was born in Newark, New Jersey, rose and went to a cupboard. "These are love powders," he said when he returned, pushing forward a small bottle containing powdered sugar. "Sprinkle them on candy or food, and whoever eats it will love you forever. And this"—he pushed forward a little glass bottle full of grape juice—"is dragon's blood. Put this on food or in coffee and whoever swallows it will be cursed by the curse of the Queen of the Seven Stars." Then by way of

diversion he added hopefully: "Past, present, and future read for ten dollars."

But Fish had risen, the love powders and dragon's blood gripped tightly in his pocket. Mumbling something about coming back soon, he groped his way out of the house of evil and into the dazzling sunshine of Fenchurch Street. A nervous grin of hope disclosed his white, protruding teeth. There remained but the problem of getting the charmed contents of the bottles into the systems of Macedonia and her parent. If Macedonia would but love him enough they could return to the peaceful domesticity of their own rooms on Queen Street, leaving Mr. Clinton to cope with the curse of the Queen of the Seven Stars at his leisure. Fish could not dream of anything sweeter.

As Fish shuffled his wide, flat feet over the undulations in the brick sidewalk of Fenchurch Street, hope rose within him, although not so high that he lost the ache in his heart. He and Macedonia had been lovers during their two years of marriage. Never before had she turned against him, and he was not experienced enough to know that a lady, of whatever color, must love a man a great deal before she will break her favorite vase over his head. He did not know that Macedonia's heart felt the same ache as his own; and his whole soul was intent upon so cajoling Fate that his little "yaller fever" would want to gather up her pickaninny—Fish Kelly, Jr., Number Two—and come to live with him alone in their old chambers on Queen Street.

His heart almost stopped beating as he came in sight of Mr. Clinton's white clapboard house. His black shoes—sliced three times longitudinally so as to expose his toes for coolness and comfort—moved more slowly. He pulled his black slouch hat further over his still blacker countenance. The gradual progress of his tall, thin frame, flapped about by a black suit three sizes too large, resembled the deliberate wavering of a measuring worm.

Presently he was in front of the neat white door. But here he stopped, his breath coming fast. He could no more have lifted the shiny brass knocker than he could have flown. As he stood there he was startled nearly out of his wits by a call: "Fish!"

From a near-by window protruded the frizzled, gray head of his next-door neighbor, the lady who, to her sympathetic regret, had spilled the beans.

"Ain't nobody home, Fish," she shrilled. "Dey done all gone out."

Fish grinned a weak grin of thanks and, glancing up and down the street, unlocked the front door and entered. He had figured out how he would get the love powders into Macedonia. Hurrying upstairs, he found on her bureau the box of cream-colored chewing taffy he had brought her the day before his expulsion. It was still half full, so taking out the love powders he sprinkled them carefully over it, rubbing them in with his finger where they fell too thick. This gave the sticks of candy a rather bizarre zebra-like appearance, but on the whole he was satisfied with his work.

From the upstairs window he looked once more to see if the coast was clear, then hastened downstairs to find some means of leaving the dragon's blood for Mr. Clinton. As he passed through the dining-drawing-room he observed that the table he and Mr. Clinton had circled had been extended to its greatest length. It was covered with a white tablecloth, and places had been set for at least a dozen people.

"When I leaves, dey has a big time!" he muttered bitterly, as he passed on to the pantry. Here there seemed to be a great profusion of food. His mouth watered at the sight of a large ham and, in the refrigerator, a turkey. It was some minutes before he thought of a way of providing the dragon's blood for Mr. Clinton exclusively. Then he remembered that on an upper shelf was a bottle of "bitters" out of which Mr. Clinton took about three fingers each evening before dinner "for his stomach."

Fish got down the bottle of bitters and poured the curse into it. Thoughtlessly licking from his thumb and finger some of the dragon's blood that had spilled, he went out the front door and shuffled round to the back of the house for one fond look at the beagle hounds before returning to exile.

To his astonishment, he found the gate of the beagle hounds' inclosure swinging wide open. Not a single one of the long-eared, long-tailed, white-and-yellow rabbit hounds was anywhere in sight.

"Macedonia done dat." The gray-haired neighbor appeared suddenly at his elbow. "She come out here to feed dem dawgs, an' she war in sech a swivet 'bout gwine to de horsepital she forgot to close dat gate."

"'Bout goin' to de which?" demanded Fish.

"Horsepital, I says."

"What she doin' goin' to a horsepital?" Fish suddenly remembered having licked the dragon's blood from his fingers. Was he to be cursed by an injury to Macedonia? "She ain't sick, is she?" he pleaded.

" 'Tain't her."

"Den who 'tis? What's matter, lady! can't you talk?"

"You ought to know mo' 'bout yo' own chile dan what I does."

"Little Fish? Lady, don't tell me it's Little Fish! What horsepital, lady?"

" 'Pears to me lak dey say it was de Childern's Horsepital on Church Street."

Fish Kelly passed by her like a flying crow. For three blocks he ran as fast as his legs would carry him and then, on Church Street, scrambled aboard a passing trolley. "Lawdy, mistah! Don't stop so much. Sho' do run like a hearse." The ten minutes' ride seemed like an hour, but finally he was standing before the white nurse in charge of the colored children's ward.

"Lady, my baby, my li'l' Fish Kelly, is he much sick, lady?"

"You mean the little Kelly baby brought in about an hour ago?"

"Yassum, lady! Dat's him."

"He isn't sick at all. I understand they were going to have some colored lawyers at their house for dinner to-night and they thought this would be a convenient time to leave the baby for examination for adenoids."

"You mean he ain't sick, lady?"

"Not a bit."

Fish heaved a sigh of immense relief and in his tar-black face his protruding, white teeth shone in an expansive grin. "Lady, kin I see dat chile my own self?"

The nurse smiled. "Go through that door on the right. He's in the last cot."

Fish shuffled with a light heart down the clean, wooden corridor, redolent of carbolic acid, turned into the ward for colored children, and tiptoed along the aisle between the small cots. He saw from afar Little Fish's black potato-shaped head silhouetted against the white pillow, and hastened his steps till he stood, with shining eyes, looking down at him.

Then a shout, a scream from Fish Kelly, Sr., echoed through the quiet building, brought doctors in white suits and nurses in blue and white uniforms crowding through the doorway and filling up the narrow aisle.

They found Fish, his face a leaden gray, holding up the sheet that had covered Little Fish, pointing downward with averted eyes. From Little Fish's left wrist a blotch of crimson saturated the sheet and mattress. A young doctor, pushing Fish aside, lifted the tiny hand.

"Miss Smith, a tourniquet, quick. What do you think of this damned carelessness! Somebody dropped this lancet and the kid rolled on it. Miss Wilson, get ready for a blood transfusion. We've got to work fast."

Little Fish, his forearm in a tourniquet, was carried out swiftly to the operating room. "We need blood for this baby," said the doctor to Fish. "Will you give it?"

Fish, lead colored, his eyes staring, swallowed his prominent Adam's apple three times before be could speak. "Yas, suh. Sho' will."

"All right, follow me," the doctor snapped

The doctor led the way two doors down the hall to the operating room. Fish, as directed, lay down upon a table next to the table occupied by his son. A nurse put what looked like a gauze-covered, coffee strainer over his mouth and nose. A sweetish, sickish odor assailed his nostrils, the nurse said: "Breathe deeply—breathe deeply—breathe deeply——" The last thing Fish thought of was the beauty of checkered sunlight on cool green grass.

The doctor was standing over him. "Here he comes!" Fish looked up and heard his own voice from far off saying: "I want a drink o' water," over and over again. The nurse lifted his head, and he drank. "Is dis heaben or hell?" he whispered.

"This is earth," grinned the doctor.

Fish looked from one to the other. "When is I goin' to die?" he asked.

"You aren't going to die at all," cried the doctor. "You'll be walking out of here pronto, as good as ever. And the kid's all right, too."

"You means I ain't goin' to die?"

"Why, no! Did you think it would kill you to give your blood to the kid?"

Fish nodded weakly.

The doctor looked at the nurse and the nurse looked at the doctor. They were not smiling. The doctor cleared his throat.

"Why did you agree to give your blood if you thought it would kill you?"

Fish rolled his eyes in languid resentment. "He my baby, ain't he?"

"Well," exclaimed the doctor, "you are certainly a white nigger!"

"If I's white, 'pearances sho' am deceivin'," grinned Fish. "Mr. Doctor, when does I leave here?"

"Right now, if you feel equal to it."

Fish swung his feet down and sat dizzily on the edge of the table. "Lady what held my nose sho' did make me sleep tight. Ain't woke up yet." He slid gingerly to the floor. "Boy, howdy! Us gwine live, after all. Feet, can you walk?"

Feet could. Feet did Feet took Fish back along the clean corridor and out into the warm sunshine. "Feet is prime; head not so good." A razor of pain cut through his forehead. He felt a sick qualm at the pit of his stomach. "Boy, for why you lick dat thumb! Boy, you brings bad luck wharever you goes." He shuffled along disconsolately. A tide of gloom and foreboding rose gradually over his spirits. "Boy, if you love yo' li'l' high yaller, you better go 'way an' leave her. Dat's best."

Before he had shuffled two more blocks, his mind was made up. It was nearly six o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Clinton would be home, the family would be assembled. He, Fish Kelly, would walk in upon them and say good-by. He held no animosity. He would tell Mr. Clinton not to drink the bitters. He would go away, go to England, or maybe Raleigh, North Ca'lina. His eyes moistened as he lingered over that scene—the gathered family, who had so mistreated him, stricken to silence as with a kind heart he turned and walked away. Then he would go to France, or possibly jump a freight for New Orleans.

Feet led him up Church Street into the suburb of Huntersville and presently within sight of the white clapboard house. The long French windows between the dining room and the side porch were open. Fish slanted a look at the sun and decided the family must be nearly ready for dinner. But he did not crave their food. He was not even afraid to confront them. He was so filled with the sentiment of renunciation, and with kindness, he feared no one. He came to give, not to receive.

He went up to the neat white door and knocked boldly. Shutters next door flew open with a bang and a gray, kinky head protruded. "Macedonia an' her ma done gone a-runnin' to de horsepital half hour ago, Fish. Dat baby o' yourn done cut hisse'f. Sho' was scairt. Jes' drapped ever'thing an' run. I been lookin' for Mr. Clinton, to tell him when he come."

Fish nodded, blinked his eyes, and let himself in at the front door. He would wait. As he walked through the small square entrance hall he thought he heard strange sounds. On the threshold of the dining room he stopped aghast.

Silhouetted against the open French windows the figure of a yellow and white dog stood with feet wide apart upon the dining-room table, teeth buried in the creamy oblong juiciness of a Smithfield ham. From all over the room there came the muffled clamor of snuffing, damp noses, of feet slipping on plates, of wagging tails striking against chair rungs. Fish saw a yellow and white body on the other end of the table, tearing white meat from the breast of a huge cold turkey, the legs of which were being drawn in opposite directions by two lop-eared beagle hounds. It was too late to do anything. The darky's delight, a cold dinner, had been ruined. On the once immaculate tablecloth, cheese and olive sandwiches had been turned over and trampled up with a succulent mess of cold greens and boiled pork. Pickles skidded from beneath tugging paws and collided with rolling roasting ears of corn. Mr. Clinton had ten beagle hounds. He kept them lean and hungry for speed.

Fish yelled and kicked at those nearest, but they merely ran to the other side of the table. He knocked the three off his end of the table, but they took the turkey with them. It landed with an unpleasant *plump* upon the carpet. He gave up.

"Ain't no use fightin' against dragon's blood."

He felt weak after the exertion. On the sideboard was a decanter of blackberry wine. He filled a glass and sipped it with appreciation. The dogs ate ravenously. To an impartial observer, seeing the wreck of what had been meant for a beautiful feast, Fish might have seemed a lean, dark, sinister spirit from another world, gloating between drafts of wine while his dumb servants completed his fiendish plans.

At this moment Mr. Clinton, followed by ten colored members of the bar, came in the front door.

Fish faced Mr. Clinton with a feeling of kindness and pity. His speech was prepared. He set down the glass of wine and wiped his protruding lips.

"Mr. Clinton," he said, while that burly gentleman, radiant in a frock coat and a speaking checked vest, stood with his colleagues and gazed upon the scene of ruin with the sudden paralysis of surprise, "Mr. Clinton, I have called upon you for de las' time, to say good-by. You treated me bad, but I forgives."

Mr. Clinton came nearer. His mouth hung open and his eyes, behind their rubber-tired spectacles, popped out in his yellow face. Fish, in his weakened condition, had been quickly susceptible to the fumes of the wine. He was going to let bygones be bygones. Before a large and distinguished audience, he would forgive his father-in-law, and say farewell. It did not occur to him that in the sight of Mr. Clinton he was as a red flag to a bull. He did not realize that Mr. Clinton would immediately remember his earlier request for the loan of the beagle hounds, the blow that followed, and look upon the present havoc as a deliberate attempt at revenge. Instead, Fish held out a long, black hand.

"Mr. Clinton, I forgives you and says good-by. I's goin' 'way for good—to France or maybe Raleigh."

Fish had hardly completed his sentence before he realized that Mr. Clinton's entire right side, preceded by Mr. Clinton's fist, was approaching him with great velocity. He saw suddenly a beautiful circle of stars, some red, some green, some yellow. The house shook and the floor struck him on the back of the head. "Lady," he muttered inaudibly, "leggo my nose." Then somebody blew the sun out.

When Fish opened his eyes again he thought he was in heaven. Everything he saw seemed to verify this impression. The ceiling was the ceiling of the beloved room on Queen Street where he and Macedonia had started their career together. The wall paper of large red roses belonged to the ceiling. In the corner was the old sewing machine, and on the mantel the heart-shaped alarm clock that looked like gold. On the floor was the same new red carpet. But there was something else, a presence, that made it seem real. He painfully turned his head.

Yes, it must be heaven. There by the window, in her neat brown dress, her glossy hair as usual coiled above her oval light-brown face, Macedonia leaned over a glass on the table into which she was pouring a yellow liquid from a bottle.

She turned at the sound of movement, came to him, knelt and slipped her arm under his head.

"My man!"

"Baby, say dem words once mo'!"

"My man. My hero man. Does he give his blood to my chile? Does he git hurted 'cause I leaves dem dawgs git out? Does ever'body, even his baby, treat him bad?"

"Whose baby is talkin'?"

"Yo' baby. Yo' baby done brung yo' back whar us belongs. Here whar us gwine stay so nobody can't part us."

Fish sighed deeply and closed his popped eyes. A beatific smile made his white teeth shine in his ebony face. "Dat owl-cat man, he sho' am a good frien'."

"What you sayin', honey?"

"Baby, I ain't sayin' nothin'. I ain't got time to say nothin'. I's too busy bein' happy."

THE UNEXPECTED VIEWPOINT

IT was in Chicago during the last national elections, in the "bloody ward" made notorious by its post-election vendetta. The meeting was being held in a smoky, ill-ventilated, narrow hall. The speaker's appearance was in harmony with his surroundings. The audience consisted for the most part of men who looked as if they could be convinced more quickly by a dollar than by all the oratory ever uncorked.

"Now," thundered the speaker, "the opposition has got out a pamphlet likening me to Judas Iscariot. Get that, will you? Comparing me to Judas Iscariot! But I don't care. I——"

"Ye-ah!" a plug-ugly in the crowd came back in a voice that was a roar. "Ye-ah! We gotcher; but how do you reckon Judas feels about it?"

The Spark in the Tinder

By Holman Day

Author of "The Psychomancers," "On the Long Leash," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

A man lay dead in the Brassua wilderness. There were two bullet wounds in his head and a rifle on the ground at his side. Was it murder, or had he been killed by a chance shot from the rifle of "Skiddy" Trask? John Lang, Skiddy's hunting companion, a successful lawyer, thought the latter possible and decided not to report finding the body. Not far away they found a woodsman, Onésime Ouellette, pinned by a felled tree. When released his rifle was missing and he told a wild tale of seeing a beautiful woman in the timberland—but wasn't sure that she wasn't a vision born of delirium. He took the hunters to his cabin and when next morning Lang gave him his card and offered legal help should the other ever need it, his gratitude was boundless. Before they started for the city Skiddy broached the matter that had caused him to accompany Lang—he and Reba Donworth wanted the lawyer to release the girl from her engagement to marry Lang, so that she could marry Skiddy. Secure in his self-esteem and knowing Skiddy to be a ne'er-do-well owned body and soul by his uncle, old Serenus Skidmore Trask, owner of the Brassua region, Lang refused scornfully. When he met Reba in the city she confessed that she loved Skiddy, but Lang had no idea of giving her up. That evening at the Talisman Club the two men had angry words. Lang was called to the Trask mansion and learned that rough old Serenus Trask had married a beautiful girl of unknown antecedents. Trask made a new will providing for his wife and instructed Lang to use a legal "twist bit" to force Skiddy to marry Maravista Blake, heiress of the Tulandic timberlands. At an interview next day Skiddy, disregarding consequences, refused, and reproached the lawyer bitterly for helping the old man to ruin his chance for happiness. Later Lang was surprised to learn that Skiddy had accepted a thousand dollars from his uncle to visit Maravista.

(A Five-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER IX.

AN EMISSARY WENT NORTH.

IN spite of his uncle's complacent belief in his authority as a tyrant, the nephew did not take the noon train that day. He was pulled toward the North country by a frantic desire to get at the heart of certain matters, but he was held in the city by the feeling that he must have a talk with Reba. He made an appointment with her over the telephone and, after her office hours of the day, she met him in a tea room whose booths offered discreet opportunity for conference.

But she was obliged to use all her soothing influence with him before he would consent to be discreet, and in her management of him could be discerned much of the girl's real mental attitude toward Skiddy Trask. She had responded to a complete, self-effacing, slavish adoration of herself—so different from John Lang's complacent air of proprietorship with which her own secret vanity had been at war. Her employment among men had given her the desire to sway others as men could sway them. Of all the men she had known, John Lang seemed to be the least amenable to woman's sway, while Skiddy Trask was the most satisfyingly subservient. Also she was genuinely fond of him, and again her eyes were revealing her feelings. After she had calmed him, she listened indulgently, smiling whenever he proclaimed that he depended on her to show him the way out of his troubles; and she was wistfully proud when he declared that he would die rather than marry anybody except her.

She patted his hand consolingly when he ended, with color, "And that's the way it stands!"

"Again it's made plain, dear," she said, "that the right woman can win any man—even your Double T. 'Double Thickness' I've always called him in my thoughts—on account of his shell where women have been concerned. Now tell me! What is she like?"

"I don't know—I didn't see her."

"But didn't you pay your respects to your new aunt?"

"I held back my real feelings and asked him to let me do so—asked him politely, Reba. And he sneered and told me that my respect assets in regard to women were so low that I'd better save what little I had and use 'em with the Blake girl."

"Is she anywhere near his age?"

"He wouldn't tell me anything about her. He told me it was none of my business."

"You tell me that John Lang says he saw her?"

"And that's all he did say about her."

"I really should know something about her before I try to help you. Under the circumstances, I suppose you'll find it hard to go to John and ask him."

"I'll never do it!" He put his hand to his cheek. He had not told her about the blow. "I don't care to. He'd only use that awful tongue of his on me, and I'd kill him," he threatened furiously.

She mused, crumbling a tea biscuit. "There's only one person in the world, it's plain, who can control your uncle and that's this woman who has captured him. I'll ask John about her."

"I don't want you to ask him for any kind of a favor, Reba! Haven't you broken the engagement?"

"I told him it was broken. But he wouldn't accept my word on the subject."

"And he's still claiming you—is going to call on you?"

"Dear boy," she returned comfortingly, "I'm sure that John is hurt in his pride more than in his love and that he'll gradually change toward me as soon as his anger is calmed down. I honestly don't think that he has been in love with me—with the love a woman really wants. I didn't think much about it before. John and I merely drifted into a companionship. I really don't remember that he ever said much about loving me."

"But when he asked you to marry him—when he—he must have grabbed you into his arms," expostulated the lover, his face ridged with emotion.

She covered her bit of embarrassment by jesting on the matter of the wooing.

"Really, you know, my dear boy, it was distressingly commonplace—when a girl might be excused for looking for a little romance. Mother said something about her happy married life while father was living, and John asked her if it wouldn't be a grand idea for him to marry me—and then he turned to me and urged me to make the vote unanimous—or something of the sort. But discussing a matter of that sort is in bad taste. Please don't make mention of it again. We have something of real importance to consider. When a woman is newly married she ought to feel kindly toward the love affairs of others. We must appeal to your uncle's wife. A new wife can always bend an old man to her wishes. Where does she come from?"

"I can't do much except guess. When we were in the Brassua region, Lang and I, we saw a sleigh go past; two persons in it. I'm pretty sure that my uncle was one of those persons. Lang declared that the other was a woman. Uncle Serenus must have found a wife in the North country."

"Then she is undoubtedly a good, simple, honest old thing who will take your side when she knows that you really love somebody. We'll hunt for information about her, up North; and then we can go ahead."

She dwelt on that point with insistence during the rest of the conversation, and young Trask went away from her with the importance of that quest firmly fixed in his mind.

He shut himself in his quarters in the Talisman Club and pondered on the situation. He was certain that he was at the peak of the dominating crisis of his life affairs. His nerves were jangled. His wits were whirling. He felt that then, if ever, he needed to steady his thoughts. From an intricate hiding place he produced a bottle of brandy and proceeded to put himself into a state of mind which would fit him to be her bold helper—to carry out her commands. In the course of time, as the brandy tide ebbed, his courage rose to the flood.

Reba had insisted that they must know the new wife. Furthermore, the uncle had made it plain that he wanted the nephew to start for the North. In spite of his new courage, Skiddy was not sufficiently fond of derring-do to go up against Double T's wishes in this juncture in the family affairs. He knew just what would happen if he were reported as being in town after accepting a thousand dollars to finance a trip to the Tulandic. The cash was making a comfortable wad in the nephew's pocket; the pressure of that cash against his ribs suggested adventure, and the brandy put its torch to the spirit of grand emprise. Over all other con-

siderations in Trask's twanging thoughts was the idea that Reba, by her insistence on the necessity of securing information, had issued the virtual command that her lover should go forth and seek.

At midnight Skiddy was in a sleeping car, going North. His notions of an ultimate destination were a bit hazy and so were his general plans. But he was sure on one point—he was not going to the Tulandic townships.

He wanted to head direct to the Brassua region in his uncle's vast holdings. He did not dare to do that, at the outset. There was no excuse for being in the Brassua if he were bound for the Tulandic. Every field boss of the Double T was an unofficial spy and reporter for the tyrant who paid the wages.

Therefore, when young Trask bought his ticket, he made an arbitrary selection of a Canadian city; he had resolved to advance resolutely on the foe from behind—to come in on the Double T lands of the north from a point still farther north. By ranging that far afield he was dodging the Tulandic and could sweep for information about his uncle's new wife in narrowing circles toward the heart of the Double T. Skiddy was wondering just what motive was prompting the bridegroom to hide his bride. There was something queer about the thing!

In the Canadian city, pondering again in the companionship of that heartening friend and counselor, brandy, the volunteer sleuth decided, for the time being, to be somebody else than Serenus Skidmore Trask, second, heir of the Double T. He sourly told himself that, as matters must stand till he could rectify conditions, he was not the heir.

He fitted himself out with garb that was suited to the winter woods, and decided that the name "Bill Jones" went well with the outfit. He wrote a letter to Reba and poured out his heart to her. It was somewhat incoherent, to be sure, but there was a sincerity that was unmistakable. The young man was honestly in love, purely and dependently in love, and the girl's keen perception had recognized as a truth what Lang's cynicism had insulted and doubted.

After he had mailed the letter, Skiddy boarded a train that would take him southward across the broad, snow-covered Laurentian slope to the foothills and the edge of the forest. He had no settled plans.

It was a long and slow ride with many stops. When he was invited to make a fourth at cards with three men of apparently sociable natures, he was glad of the chance to kill time. He was quite accustomed to losing money in games and in this case he paid with sporting equanimity. His manner pleased the men. He shared with them a bottle of liquor with great good will. After a time, the party became decidedly friendly. As if loath to leave his companions, Trask did not alight from the train at a certain Saint Something for which destination he had bought a ticket on a guess. He paid a cash fare for a point farther on.

One of his new friends was mellowed enough to suggest that it was a case of "Don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way!"

And Trask was also in a mood sufficiently mellowed to agree. "I'm from the States, and I'm up here where a man can draw a cork and a long breath without a prohibition agent looking over his shoulder."

"Meaning, I take it, that you don't favor prohibition."

"Do I act like it?"

"Can't always tell by actions, mister. Some of those Federal prohibition agents come to the border and act like rum smugglers so as to get under the skins of the boys who are really doing business."

"Mack Templeton fashion, eh?" suggested another of the group.

"Damn him!" blurted the third member of Trask's party of new friends.

"Mustn't curse a Federal agent, boy!" protested the man who had particularly engaged the stranger in talk. "Anybody overhearing might think you had been trying to get something past Templeton when he was on the job."

Trask felt no especial ambition to know who Templeton was. But he was up there to pry for information and he thought he might as well begin to practice. He put a question, indifferently enough.

"Well," replied the mellowed friend, "he started enough of a stir up here to have a song made up about him by old 'Bum' Mudge, the Line House loafer." He leaned back in his seat and sang:

"Oh, they call me Handsome Mack, and I always cut a dash
When I meet up with a lady fair and twirl a nice mustache.

Yes, I cut! Knife is out! For all that comes my way!
I'll cut a fellow's gizzard out, and his heart and soul, for pay.
There's nothing in this friendship bunk to cut a bit of ice.
Friends shouldn't pay? The hell you say! Come through, there, with the price!"

When the minstrel finished the doggerel lay, he made a pretense of twisting a non-existent mustache. "It's black—as black as the heart of Handsome Mack." He went on in a singsong tone. "'For a border maid or a trick in a trade he swings a wicked eye.' That's in another verse."

But Trask, it was plain to be seen, did not find the mockery amusing. The recollection of a twisted black mustache on the blood-dappled face of a certain dead man in the woods to the south was a very recent memory.

"Say, our friend doesn't know what you're driving at, and may think you're making fun of him," protested another of the group, marking Trask's sober countenance. "You've got to be pretty much of a stranger in these parts not to know Templeton—and you're lucky if you don't know him. Are you sure you don't?"

"I never heard of him and I was never in these parts before."

The man hesitated for some time. "That came out of you pretty honest, mister. But in these days along the border, all strangers get considerably more than the once over! I'm going to ask you a saucy question and if you feel like answering it, I hope you'll sound just as honest as you did a minute ago. What's your line of business?"

There was impressive candor in Trask's reply. "I haven't any business. I never did a day's work in my life. I get an allowance from my folks. I'm up here on a lark, that's all."

"So are we," announced the song bird. "Come along with us and see what we can scare up for excitement! What say?"

There was invitation in the eyes of all three of the men.

Skiddy said "Yes!" with vigor. Somehow, in his thoughts, the twisted points of that black mustache were sticking up like promising ends of the skein that he hoped to unravel. There was no suggestion, to be sure, that the affairs of his uncle or his uncle's new wife were snarled in the skein along with one Mack Templeton. But it was the nature of Skiddy Trask to allow himself to be drawn along by circumstances, to drift in the current of events, to be counseled by tips and goaded by hunches. Furthermore, he was in a strange country and had been lonesome till he met these men; and he needed guides.

CHAPTER X.

AT THE LINE HOUSE.

Young Mr. Trask was lying awake in his bunk in a log camp in the Canadian woods. It was the second night after his meeting with the three men.

In that time a great deal had been accomplished in the way of a friendly understanding and a thorough amalgamation of interests—so much so, that he was knowingly a fourth member of a band of liquor smugglers, with five hundred dollars of his money invested in the venture.

The open fire in the camp was dying but there was sufficient glow to reveal to Skiddy what his wide-propped eyes had been surveying for some time—a goodly mound of something covered by blankets. It was the stock of Canadian high wine, its one-hundred-and-ninety-proof strength capable of being reduced, or split, four times to make it potable when offered to the trade. The stuff was in quart tins and the smugglers had secured it from a cache in the woods to which the Canadian coconspirators had brought it.

Skiddy was both afraid and fond of that mound. His new friends had figured for him his profits. For his five hundred dollars, they told him, he would receive five thousand dollars after the high wine had been diluted, flavored and sold to consumers. They had money of their own invested in that mound. They were frank gentlemen. They told Skiddy that their reason for taking him into the combination was because he was a stranger to that much-discussed Mack Templeton and to the other border sleuths of the government. Skiddy was to do the preliminary scouting because his companions were too well known to the officers.

The new member of the firm had not required protracted coaxing to enter upon that service; after sampling the high wine he had defiantly volunteered to tackle the whole United States, single-handed.

When he looked at the mound of cans and pondered that what was legal and of modest

value on one side of an invisible line in a trackless forest was increased tenfold in value by being hauled across the line to become illegal, he had the glorified feeling that he had found a way to become independent of an uncle who was enslaving him. In the useless idleness that had been forced on him by that uncle, Skiddy had spent wretched hours in efforts to think up some way of making money. The god of good luck, he felt, had led him directly upon the right scheme. It was Reba who had indirectly brought it about. His love for her was surely blessed. She was his talisman of beneficent fortune.

He had been wakened in the middle of the night by the snoring of his comrades. The wind was sweeping through the big spruces and wailing in the crevices of the window sashes. That sound was not stimulating. He fell to wondering why so few persons, apparently, were trafficking in contraband liquor if the job was so easy and the returns so great.

In the conferences that had been held, the song man had suggested that Trask should go ahead and fix matters with Templeton. A stranger could prevail, they told him, where men who had had run-ins with Templeton could not spin a thread. Templeton had been double crossing all his former associates and naturally expected them to come back at him in a spirit of revenge. Trask's last word to his companions that night had been a swaggering promise to undertake the errand; his valor was flushed by the high wine.

While the wind howled without, and after his few winks of sleep had sobered him, the job did not appeal to him. In order to screw up his courage he was obliged to fix his eyes on the mounds of cans and figure the profits and think of Reba and a future of happiness that his own efforts could finance.

In the morning he was up before the others, and he sneaked in his stocking feet to a bottle in the corner and fortified his determination to see the matter through.

Again the new friends, before he set away, heartened him with a rehearsal of the information they had given him in regard to the man he was to see.

"Remember that he's a crook and always has been one. He's not any decent officer of the government who will give you the scornful eye. He's after graft. That's why he has hired out with Uncle Sam. When he was a game warden he worked for graft. When he was a guide he laid himself out to get mixed parties who were soft-footing it in the woods; then he worked 'em for blackmail. If there's anything on the border he hasn't been in, on a crooked basis, it's because the thing didn't offer any chance for a crook to pull down change. So, look him in the eye and put it straight to him."

After their breakfast one of the men donned snowshoes with Trask and guided him to the highway which led to the border. It snaked away through the forest toward the south. Skiddy packed his snowshoes on his back and went on alone.

There was some uncertainty as to Templeton's whereabouts, Trask's confederates had confessed, because Templeton in his new occupation evidently intended to keep everybody guessing.

"It isn't so much that he's trying to catch smugglers," stated the song man. "But he has double crossed so many of his old chums, betraying them so that he and his gang can resell the stuff they capture, that he's afraid of catching a bullet in the back of his head if he stands still in one place long enough for anybody to draw a bead."

The adventurer came upon the Line House suddenly. He turned a corner of the forest avenue and there it was, on the poll of a wind-swept hill, a long, low structure with a big sign to label it. Templeton was as likely to be at the Line House as anywhere, now that travel through the snow was difficult, the smugglers had said.

Blanketed horses were at the hitch rail. Even from a distance Trask heard in the crisp silence of the frosty day the jangle of a piano.

He found in front of the door of the house a granite block set into the ground. The wind had dusted the snow from the top and the inscriptions, "Canada" and "U. S." were revealed. The international line, it was plain, ran through the door; the building was set squarely on the border.

In the room to the right of Trask, when he entered, four men were dancing in couples, and a slatternly girl was playing the piano; the men kept on their caps and fur coats and sweat was streaming down their faces. On the left, its door also open, was a big room blue with tobacco smoke. Men loafed there.

Straight ahead, down the narrow corridor,

sounded the clink of glasses. Trask quested more courage. He found a bar in a little room and he ordered a drink and surveyed with interest a man who was designating on the wall of the room with the edge of his hand the location of the boundary line. The man to whom he was explaining proceeded to straddle the line, and drank off his dram with a humorous observation that the situation suggested.

Trask sociably invited the men to join him and they did. He allowed them to talk at their will, hoping for some mention of Mack Templeton. After a time he ranged through the open rooms of the lower floor of the place, his eyes out for a twisted black mustache.

In a corner of the far room, that was hazy with smoke, an old man dozed, and one of the sociable drinking companions who had followed Trask pointed to the man and said that he was a poet.

"He's Bum Mudge. If you'll buy him a drink he'll sing you a song. It's the way he manages to keep drunk."

After the bard had shambled into the bar and had swallowed his drink he lifted a whisky-cracked voice and sang something about "a maid-dun buh-witching," and seemed reproachful because Trask did not show enthusiasm after the last verse. But Trask was seeking the Templeton ballad, in order to pave the way to certain queries. He bought five more drinks for the lyric genius who insisted on rendering repeated songs about maidens so fair.

"It's what young chaps like," he retorted sourly when Trask asked for something different.

"Give him the Mack Templeton shivaree," said the man. "The stranger may like it, even if he never heard of Mack."

Mr. Mudge, willing to please, obeyed, and then staggered away to resume his nap.

"I suppose he wouldn't dare to sing that song if this Templeton, whoever he may be, was anywhere around these parts?" prodded Trask.

"Oh, Bum sang it to Templeton's face in this bar, right after the song had been composed, and Mack bought a round of drinks and had Bum sing it over again. You can't faze Mack with a song—or much of anything else."

"By the way, where is the damn sneak, anyway?" asked a man. "Hasn't been around here for some time."

"If that's good enough to be true I'll go hunt up that sister he's been so choice of," promised the bartender.

"Sister!" The speaker was a skeptic, and he spat violently to emphasize it. "Hell!"

"Would anybody take a sister into the places and up against the propositions where he has taken that girl?" demanded another.

"Yes! Mack Templeton," stated the bartender.

It was evident that the other men were not so strongly friends of Templeton that they cared to waste words defending him against that aspersion. Discussion of Templeton ceased.

Trask went and sat in the room with the loafing smokers until the atmosphere nigh strangled him. Then he went into the room where the girl had been playing the piano. She and the men were gone. A little later one of the idlers of the bar sauntered to the door, perceived Trask and entered and exchanged some commonplaces about the weather and the liquor question. Then he whittled a match, picked his teeth with it and proceeded with an ocular estimate of Trask in a way that made the latter uneasy.

"Plain enough to see that you're a city fellow, in spite o' your rig-out! I never expect to get to a city—not down in the States! Might make the trip pay me, but don't expect to take it. You from the States?"

"Yes!"

"Going back?"

"Yes!"

"What city do you live in?"

"I'm not ashamed of my city, my friend, but suppose you lay off that quizzing till I know what it's all about!"

"Sure thing!" agreed the other amiably. "I'm only passing the time o' day with you. Let's see what other up-to-date subject there is up here. Oh, yes! About Mack Templeton! It made me grin to hear those guys out there gossiping and guessing about why he doesn't show up around here."

"Why doesn't he?" Trask flashed the query with eagerness.

"Now is my time to follow your lead and tell you it's none of your business. I'll simply say that I know where he is, and we'll let it go at that."

"I've got—I'm more or less interested in getting a look at him, since I heard that song." Trask stammered when the man

squinted at him inquisitively. "It's only curiosity."

"A lot of men have been interested in seeing Mack since he got his last job. I dare say, though, it wasn't out of curiosity," drawled the gossiper. "I know where he is—but you don't stand much show of seeing him up this way in these times—or ever again for that matter."

In spite of his fear of showing too much eagerness and betraying his errand with Templeton, Trask was determined to go after such information as this man possessed. Skiddy was not an especially deft questioner in any line. The obsession of that dead man was foremost in his mind. "You don't mean to say that he's dead, do you?"

"Not by a blamed sight is he dead. I should say *not!* I know just exactly where he is." The informant tapped a forefinger into his palm as if to indicate that his knowledge was specific and local.

"Where is he?" Trask confessed his interest then by his precipitateness.

"In clover," said the man, and he winked at Skiddy and rose and walked out of the room.

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING FOR SALE.

Skiddy's impulse was to chase after this peculiar person who alone of all the others at the Line House seemed to be able to help in regard to the errand on which he had come. But even with wits muddled by the liquor he had consumed, the emissary of the rum runners was too self-conscious of the nature of his new business to show overanxiety in locating a Federal agent who had such a reputation for venality. When Trask had cooled down a bit, he decided that the man was probably another government agent, clumsily trying to trap a suspected smuggler. The amateur scout felt that he, Skiddy Trask, was now a very shrewd person, after all

The man came back and shut the door behind himself, and said, "I've got you sized up, friend. You needn't be afraid of me. I have dealt with Templeton in just the way you want to deal with him—many's the time! But he isn't on the watchdog job any longer."

"Are you?" blurted Trask desperately.

"Not on your life! Not enough money in it, if a fellow has to stay honest. And unless he stays honest he won't stay very long on the job. That's the way Templeton figured it. He beat it just before he was due to be fired. And, as his last crack, he worked the trick both ways from the middle. He gave me a tip that he was getting through, and I went to it and made my last trip a real clean-up. It was—but not for me! I put every dollar I had into that white rum—every cent I had left after paying Templeton—and he grabbed off the whole load, sold it to a fence and got away."

Neither his tone nor his countenance revealed any bitterness.

"It's all in the game," he added. "When both parties are playing with phony decks of cards, let the slickest operator win, and the yap take his medicine. But it leaves me in a hoot of a hole this trip, I'll tell the world. I've got to have money sudden, and I'm willing to sell something that I can't use in my own business right now. There! That's honest!"

"Why are you picking me out as a buyer?"

"Because you're carrying a roll. Saw it when you paid for drinks."

"I don't want to buy anything."

"I've been waiting here twenty-four hours, looking for somebody with a roll. Twenty-four hours is a long time to spend in the Line House, without spending anything except the hours. In about ten minutes more I'll be kicked out. What I've got to sell can't be seen by the human eye—but it's as good as ready money when it's handled by a chap like you."

"Look here! What do you take me for?"

The man winked. "For what you are. I've been watching you. When a man comes sleuthing for Mack Templeton with that look you had in your eye, it means that he's in a game to beat the law. If he'll beat the law in one game, he'll sit in on another. My game needs a smooth operator—a city chap. Look at me!" He spread his hands in disparaging estimate of his appearance. "I couldn't get past the watchdog of a city house."

Skiddy was filled with an anger which, so he tried to make himself believe, was righteous. He rose and started for the door. The stranger put out his arm as a barrier.

"Don't get mad because I have picked you. These shorthorn steers in this locality wouldn't know how to use a city tip of the kind I have to sell. Hold on, I tell you!

You think it isn't ready money, hey? Well, what is there in the North country that's any nearer name for ready money than old Trask of the Double T?"

Skiddy went stumbling back, away from the barring arm. His eyes were goggling.

"I see you know him," remarked the stranger, after a grunt of satisfaction.

"I never heard of him," lied Skiddy, feeling particularly desperate. This person, after plucking rudely away the mantle of Skiddy's present secret occupation, seemed determined to divest him of every shred of incognito. There was danger. The man was undoubtedly one of those Double T spies whom the nephew had been fearing.

"I can see that you're lying, but no matter! A slick operator always lies—it's a part of the business."

"I ask you again, why of all others around here do you pick me out?"

"Because I've been hoping a city man would come along. Haven't I just told you? Listen! Slip me a hundred and I'll give you a tip that's worth—well, the size of the pot will be what a smart fellow like you wants to make it."

Skiddy ducked under the restraining arm and hurried to the door.

"Oh, I see better than ever that you know old Trask all right enough!" taunted the man with something to sell. "You think you couldn't blast cash out of him with dynamite."

The nephew had the door open.

"But you can dreen the dollars out of him, friend, by using that new wife of his!"

Skiddy Trask promptly shut the door, put his back against it and confessed all his sudden, wild interest by his demeanor of consternation.

The man gave Trask another of those cryptic winks. "I seem to have jabbed the right button, son! Well, no matter what it's all about, so long as I have rung the bell."

"What do you know about his wife?"

"Easy—easy! Let me tell you *how* I know. You can have that part free. I'll own up that I chased Templeton south, after he had cleaned me and had sold my booze." His face hardened. "I'm not saying what would have happened if I had located him. But I didn't get to him. I lost him and started back toward the border. I stopped at Elder Ashael's on Angel Knob to get something to eat, being busted and hungry. Ever heard of Elder Ashael?"

"No!"

"This time you sound honest and I'll say that he's a good old man. Was a parson before he made himself a hermit. Family trouble, so I hear. Ever hear of what the woodsmen call a 'Charmer Man?' "

Trask shook his head.

"Charms away sickness. Stops blood flow by touching wounds, and all that. Men like him have been known in the woods for years. Old sirs tell about 'em. Ashael has fifty white birches around his camp and calls 'em his angel band. But no matter about angels. Only this! Whilst I was eating old Ashael's bannock bread and beans, Trask of the Double T rode up in a buckboard and brought an angel with him and Ashael married 'em, and I was called in and signed the license stub as a witness. It was nigh evening of that day just before the first snow came in the North country."

Skiddy, in that torment of his anxiety to know more, was finding the man garrulous. "What about the woman?" he snapped.

The other put up a protesting left hand. He extended the right hand and snapped the forefinger into the palm. "From now on I'm selling goods—not giving 'em away."

Skiddy hesitated. Then he pulled his money out and peeled off two fifty-dollar bills. But when he extended them the man shook his head. "Price has gone up. Price now is nearer to value of goods. I've got eyes, you understand!"

"You devilish bloodsucker, how much?"

"Two hundred bucks, friend."

Trask paid the money. He brightened, taking thought. Once more the talisman of Reba's influence was leading him to good luck; he reflected that this chance meeting was a part of the new and beneficent fortune that had been attending him; there was plenty of profit in that mound under the blankets. He surrendered the money without a pang.

"Much obliged, friend. You have paid for your tip. Of course, old Trask has taken her to the city. Heard her tell Uncle Ashael how happy she was going to be, seeing grand things. Now you go along to the city. Dress up all slick and get to see her in private. A chap with your looks can say he's selling jewelry, or anything. I don't need to post a city crook, like you!"

"Yes," said Trask, his face a study in feverish eagerness. "And then what?"

The other started to speak, stopped, and regarded Trask's agitated countenance with a shrewdly appraising smile in silence.

"Well?" urged Trask. "Go on! I've paid your damn price!"

"Ah!" replied his tormentor, with a chuckle. "That's just it, after all! Come to think of it, I don't know that you have."

"I know I've paid two hundred dollars for nothing!" blustered Trask wrathfully. "What does what you've told me get me? What do I have to say to this woman, anyway?"

The other's shrewd eyes searched Trask's keenly.

"You really need to know?" he asked.

"I've got to know!"

"Well, seeing it's as bad as that I guess the information *is* worth a little more to you."

"See here! What do you mean? I won't pay you another——" and there Trask suddenly stopped as his companion with a shrug turned away and started off. Suddenly his brief anger changed to almost whining appeal.

"Wait a minute—wait a minute!" he cried. "It's robbery, but just what do you want anyway?"

The other swung around sharply.

"I want just five hundred dollars for my goods, all told," he snapped. "Come across and I'll hand you all you need to know. If you don't, we'll just let the thing drop where it is."

Trask's face reddened with another surge of anger, and then paled in the intensity of his greed to know what this man could tell. To meet the price would leave him nearly broke for the present. But he could meet it. His travel and poker losses he had paid from some spare money of his own outside of the thousand his uncle had given him. For another moment he hesitated in agonized uncertainty.

"Well?" His torturer's voice came sharp. "What about you? I'll give you a half a minute to take it or leave it!"

"All right—all right," surrendered Trask, and emptying out his remaining store of cash he counted out three hundred dollars, leaving himself only a dollar or two, and jammed the sum into the man's outstretched palm. "Now that I'm broke," he said almost tearfully, "perhaps you'll show a little human decency."

"I haven't much of that left, after my life on this border. But I'll show you just how you can handle the one woman who can turn around and handle old Trask to a fare-you-well. You stand up in front of her and look this way—and do this!"

The man had a mustache and he twisted it into spiked points and narrowed his eyes in an evil squint.

"Simply say to her, 'I'm just down from the North country. How about Mack Templeton?' She'll flop."

Trask's scowl expressed his doubts as to the value of the information.

"Do you think you need to deliver a stump speech to that woman?" asked the man with scorn. "The way to work a woman of her kind is to say only a little and let her do the thinking and wondering. She'll flop, I say. And when she gets back into a condition where she can do some good listening you tell her that you'll take on the job of handling the Mack Templeton matter, and that you know just how, but that it will cost her so and so! Name your price. She'll pay it."

"But I want to know who she is—all about her!"

"I have given you your money's worth—no need of anything more. But I'll throw this much in extra: I'll keep away and give you a clear field with her. I'm not slick enough to do a good job at blackmail, anyway. It takes a city chap for that work. Go to it, and good luck."

He hurried out and barricaded himself in the other room behind a row of loafers.

The sun was setting low in the west. Skiddy had promised to meet one of his companions before dark in order to make camp. Not at all sure that he had received the worth of his money, he left the Line House and struck out toward the north.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE HERD.

On his return to his associates Trask turned in the information that Mack Templeton had gone away—somewhere—nobody seemed to know where.

"Well, all kinds of border news helps, when you know how to use it," stated the song man. "If Mack isn't on the job right now, you can bet that some other Federal officer is—and he's probably a stranger. If the thing can't be fixed up ahead, it's no use to try to get a horse load across the

line by the main road. We'll have to take the hand sled and haul the stuff through the woods. After we duck the Federal chap, we can probably dodge the sheriffs."

"Which means that we can't get south to the regular outlet," agreed another. "Our legs wouldn't hold out. But we can haul as far as the Double T lands and sell to the camp bootleggers. It'll mean that old Trask won't get much work out of his crews till the grand drunk is over, but what do we care for old Trask?"

The next day they put the sled in shape for travel and were well across the border by nightfall. They followed old logging roads.

Skiddy, a club sybarite, was glad of the chance to sleep in a corner of an abandoned horse hovel, in a set of old camps, the only structure that still had a roof. In the morning he was barely able to pull one leg after the other. There were two sleds and he was harnessed to one along with a companion. He was beginning to understand why so few persons were in the liquor smuggling business.

In the late afternoon three objects suddenly bounced into the road ahead of the rum runners. The objects were burly and furry. For a startled instant Skiddy took them to be bears. Then one of them hailed hoarsely, spicing commands with oaths. In front of the furry forms weapons glinted.

"You can't dicker with that bunch—they're the county sheriffs," panted the song man. He dropped the cords of his sled and leaped behind a tree. His companions followed suit.

"Hands up—and come out!" ordered the spokesman of the officers.

"What do you say, boys?" asked one of Skiddy's associates. He was reaching for his hip, pulling aside the flap of his leather coat.

"We've worked too damn hard for it, to be stopped now," said the song man. He growled venomously. "I've been saying what I'd do to the sneaks sooner or later. Now I'm going to do it."

He pulled his gun and fired. The furred men leaped to shelter behind trees and their rifles spat viciously.

Skiddy Trask dropped on his face and began to flounder backward through the snow. He did not look behind to see where his course was taking him. The guns were going on both sides and the forest roared with echoes. He had no weapon. He was eliminated as a combatant. He was sick with terror. He crawled more rapidly, pushing himself along backward with his arms. Suddenly, space opened beneath him. He went rolling down a steep slope, where bushes and saplings had found a footing between the ledges. His final fall into the icy bed of a brook knocked the breath out of him.

While he gazed up at the incline down which he had rolled, he heard the more desultory crack of the firearms—and then a man screamed with a nerve-rasping, choking squall like a pig in the slaughter pen. Trask was nerved by that terrible sound to rise and flee from the place where men were killing each other.

Even in his panic a sort of animal instinct prompted him to keep to the bed of the brook, leaping along the rocks in order that he might not leave a trail in the snow. He ran until his breath left him, and he was so blinded by the tears of his efforts that he could not see his way. He continued to stagger on slowly. In a hollow a huge old pine drooped its shaggy boughs, snow laden. The ground near the trunk was bare of snow. And the night was coming on. Trask stumbled to the shelter the tree afforded. He was not able to go on through the snow. It seemed to him that the friendly old tree drooped its boughs lower to hide him. He was dripping with sweat. He did not dare to sit down. He began a weary round of the trunk of the tree and all through the night he trod in that circle in the black darkness, fighting off his torpor, knowing well that if he paused and slept he would not wake.

He thanked God for the dawn, for the east was lustrous and the sun rose in a clear sky. He patted the trunk of the friend who had sheltered him and then he ventured forth. His footprints of the evening before, near the tree, showed him the direction in which he had come. He shuddered and made sure that he marched off in the opposite direction, going toward the east, the sun in his face. He tramped for many hours, hunger gnawing at him. He had no plans. There were no roads to suggest that he might find his way out of the woods. He was not sure, in his fear, that he wanted to leave the woods. He was anxious to get far enough away from the scene of that shooting and the telltale squall so that he would

not be identified with the affair, whatever it was that had happened.

In the late afternoon the urge of the desire to live overcame his almost unconquerable fear of meeting men who might accuse him. Resting for a few moments at the top of a slope, he heard the mumble of many voices; the sound was passing along below him. He made a sudden and desperate resolution and went plunging down through the snow, came upon a tote road and followed the band of men who were trudging along. The file closer was the only man who did not carry a pack.

"How in blazes did you manage to drop behind?" he demanded roughly and stopped and pushed Trask into the ranks ahead of him. "Where's your duffel?"

"Didn't have any," muttered Skiddy.

"Nice pickings we get these days from the agencies! Men either bring a trunk or they don't bring anything. And you don't look as if you could do a day's work, you shrimp!"

Trask ran his hand over the stubble on his grimed face and looked down at his garments, frayed by the rocks. He felt a surge of resentment, but he was not surprised by the boss' failure to see in him anything that would distinguish him from the other lumberjacks. As a Trask, he knew that the coming and going Toms, Dicks, and Harrys of the woods possessed as little individuality in the eyes of their overseers as so many goats. He went tramping along with the others, a new crew that was bound in toward the choppings. The men were foreigners of some variety; he could not determine their breed by their talk.

The boss yelled to the men to tumble out of the road to let a tote team go past; it had come jangling up from the rear and was loaded with bags of grain. Trask noticed that the bags were marked "TUL." So, he was on the lands of the heiress who had agreed to take him for her husband. He wondered whether his precipitate uncle had announced the engagement.

In camp that evening he herded with the other nondescripts at table and clattered his tin dishes with as much zest as any of them. Skiddy, to his certain knowledge, was never so ravenously hungry in all his life. He dragged himself to his bunk and fell asleep before he had time to give any thought to his lot or his plans.

In the dark of the morning he was routed out by the cookee's shrill call, "Whoo-e-e-e! All out! Grub on the ta-a-able!"

And after he had eaten, Skiddy, as was his habit, drifted with the tide of circumstances. The boss had told him to grab an ax and get busy.

In that crew, only another nonentity among stupid human animals, he seemed to be well hidden from the consequences which might arise from that affray in the woods. Trask determined to stay in the herd for a time.

He made poor shift at chopping. He had no strength and was really a ludicrous spectacle even among the awkward amateurs who had been sent up from the city agencies. But toilers of all sorts are hard to get, these days, in the north woods. Furthermore, the boss of the camp had orders from headquarters to make all men work out the cost of railroad fare. It was supposed, of course, that Skiddy had come by rail with the others.

When the news finally drifted by word of mouth to the camp that a deputy sheriff had been wounded nigh unto death and a rum runner had been killed in an affray in the Durfey woods, Skiddy was more disinclined than ever to say anything about how he came there or when he wanted to go away. He decided that he would stay indefinitely. He feared that the description of the fourth member of the rum-running party might be extant among the officers.

He was useless as a chopper, he was unable to hold his own at the end of a "gashing fiddle," as the cross-cut saw was called. He even made sad work of the job that the most incapable of the foreigners handled after a fashion—cutting the limbs off the fallen trees. In the end, step by step, he was crowded down to the lowest grade of service—there on the lands of the heiress to whom he had been promised! He was assigned to the most menial tasks in the horse hovel. The teamsters called him "Chambermaid Charlie."

In the cook house, where he filled in his spare time by helping the cookee, the cook's assistant, to peel potatoes and split kindling wood, he was called "The Nubbin." That is the name of a worthless ear of corn, fit only to be tossed into the garbage can.

And as the days of this bitter servitude went on, as his soul grew raw and his rage rampant, Trask came by degrees to be little else than a madman when he thought on

John Lang—the mainspring of the whole machine of persecution, so Skiddy's mania insisted. He was silent in all his trouble—dumb, morose, malevolent. He planned methods of retaliation.

In his degradation he was surrendering the hope of possessing Reba. He placed no further dependence on the word of the stranger who had bilked him out of his money. He was lashing himself to that pitch of desire for vengeance where he was willing to sacrifice even his own tortured life in order to ruin Lang. The apathy of despair alternated with his periods of helpless rage, and in his absorption in his woes he lost run of the lapse of time.

On one occasion, after he had suffered from some especially ignominious bit of mischief—slights had led to blows, and he had been beaten by fists—he declared in his frenzy that he was the nephew of Serenus Trask of the Double T.

The boss locked him up in a storehouse for two days in order to give him time to recover from that lunacy.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT HOME, WITH THE TRASKS.

Serenus Skidmore Trask, baron of the Double T, tendered a formal "At Home" reception for his bride!

Motor cars trailed in slow procession to the radiant entrance of the canopy and fur-wrapped figures alighted and were engulfed in the maw of the striped canvas corridor that stretched like a leviathan from the mansion's broad portal to the curb.

Music throbbed within doors. All the windows of the house shed glory into the winter night. The arriving guests, curiously staring, buzzing sotto-voce comments, were evidently finding an element of the bizarre in the affair, rather than viewing it as a reception on the conventional plane. From what was said in the confidence of the limousines, it might have been suspected that curiosity rather than social favor for the host had influenced many of those who had responded to invitations.

For a considerable time there had been vague rumors in the city that Trask had been married, somewhere, and had brought his bride on at least one fleeting visit to the stone house. But the bleak mansion, behind the black-growth trees, had given no sign that it housed a bride, and nobody on the roster of Trask's acquaintances had been invited to meet that bride.

Then had followed weeks when it was apparent that the only folks in the house were carpenters, painters, decorators and other workers of the guilds of refurbishers.

There was no concealment of the work of making over the house. All the pines and the spruces that had masked the structure were leveled by the ax. The cant dog was ripped off the front door. The logs which had wainscoted the master's den were pushed out of the windows and hauled away. Everything in the house that suggested Trask's interest in the forest had been cleared out.

The rumor that a bride had been in the house before the work of renovation was begun was swept entirely out of sight by the known fact of the return of the Trasks from the South.

If Serenus Skidmore Trask had once believed in concealment of the treasure he had found, he held to that belief no longer. He flaunted the possession of the glorious young creature who had become Mrs. Trask. The Trask limousine traversed all the principal streets and went slowly, and the ravishing face behind the polished glass was seen by all. Beside the wife was Trask, always. He glanced from side to side, enjoying the stares of the multitude. Even his wall eye glowed with pride.

In that transformation of his whole nature, in his shift from secretiveness to flamboyant publicity, he was as prodigal with his invitations to the "At Home" as the patronesses of a charity ball would have been.

John Lang received a strictly formal surprise in connection with that reception. Reba Donworth wrote him a little note, saying that she would like to attend, asking his escort for herself and her mother.

She had been refusing Lang's invitations for a long time, not curtly, not showing absolute dislike for him or his company, but sweetly apologetic in her refusals to go anywhere with him. He had called on her, as the weeks passed, but less often than had been his custom. He would not admit to himself that he loved her less; occasionally he told her that he loved her more. But for the most part they kept off the topic of love. Neither of them ever mentioned Skiddy Trask. Reba had not even informed her mother that she had received that letter from the Canadian city.

Lang's sense of pride was pricked deeply when her patient submissiveness informed him that he was endured rather than welcomed. But his resolve to win her—to tire out that folly which had turned her toward young Trask—made him persist. It was his nature to go grimly ahead toward any goal which he had set as a worth-while objective.

When Reba was presented she greeted the hostess with a warmth whose fervor was refreshingly contrasted with the rather chary and circumspect compliments offered by the society inspectors who had come to peer and pry. The girl-wife responded to that fervor. It was a rift in the cloud of smothering conventionality.

Lang had been studying the girl as he and his companions made their slow advance in the line. He was remembering her protests against being kept in a corner, in the dark. Her beauty was now framed with jewels, her cheeks were flushed, her charm was supremely glorious. But he perceived in her an inquietude that was akin to terror. She seemed to be awed as well as frightened. She had demanded light and fun! He understood how she had swayed the uxorious Trask to give what she pleaded for. But she wore the air of a child who had demanded a genie's wand and was mortally in fear of what she had summoned up.

She had shared with Lang the smile she gave Reba. "Now I am happy—again!" she murmured. "You make me feel very brave when I look at you, Sir Knight! I have been waiting for you to come."

Lang winced when old Trask gave him that prod with the thumb which pointed Double T's jocosity. "What are you waiting for, Lang? After my setting you an example, what are you waiting for, I ask? I reckoned on you being married by the time I got back from the South!"

Reba hastily released the hostess' hand and passed on. Lang, looking into Mrs. Trask's eyes, wondered what her change of expression meant. He was accustomed to depend on the eyes for revelations of the truth, he told himself. But he was finding it hard work to believe that he saw reproach, regret and protest dimming the luminous gaze that was lifted to his.

"I hope to know you much better," Reba had told the young wife.

When Lang joined her Reba repeated that wish to him. "She will find no real friends among such women as are flocking here to-night. Won't you help me to know her real well?"

"You would have me clear a path for you so that you may serve as the nephew's pleader, eh?"

"Is your suspicion kind?"

"Possibly not. But it's correct. I don't feel inclined to help you, Reba. Do you mean to tell me that you're still clinging to a coward who has run away from you and from his duty to do as his uncle requests?"

"I thought it was understood between us that we'd let the topic sleep."

"You have stirred it up—it's awake!"

"I simply wish to be a friend to a girl who——"

"I ask pardon—but you must remember that I am a lawyer, and my mind instantly leaps to analyze the motives that produce any wish."

"You're too much of a lawyer—in everything," she retorted.

"Possibly! And as attorney for Trask, the elder, I'm going to be careful that Trask, the younger, obeys his uncle's commands—that is to say, obeys as soon as we can catch him."

"John, are you sure that you haven't gone out of your way to wreck another man's life?"

"I have only stayed in my path of duty, and have gone straight ahead for the good of all concerned."

Reba turned away from the cold eyes that were challenging her motives in seeking friendship with the aunt of Skiddy Trask. The embarrassment was relieved by a social chatterer.

"Oh, Mr. Lang! You are so close to the family! Do tell me from what part of the South Mrs. Trask comes."

"I have not been informed, Mrs. Barron."

"Oh, you lawyers are so secretive."

"I assure you that I am not secreting any information from you in this instance, my dear madam."

But the gossip gleaner was not satisfied with his apparent sincerity; she gave him a simultaneous tap with her fan and a dig with her tongue. "But I just heard Mrs. Trask confide to somebody who was discussing you that you are her dearest friend, helper and confidant. But I suppose you lawyers must guard the sanctity of your confessional." She went away.

Lang from his height could look over the heads that were swaying between himself and the hostess. As if she felt the potent influence of his stare, she turned and looked his way and smiled. But he felt the same sense of irritation that had attacked him when the girl had imperiled his standing with Trask by jesting about a secret. Was she a fool in her naiveté?

"Your client is wonderfully pretty," observed Reba dryly. "Are you sure that you did not dress for her sake on a certain occasion that I have not forgotten?"

"I did not know that I was to see Mrs. Trask that evening—I did not know there was a Mrs. Trask. I have never seen her since then, till now. We seem to be bothering with a great deal of idle talk. I'll take you and your mother in where the refreshments are."

In the crowded buffet there was the customary riot of chatter, but above all other sounds one woman's strident tones carried. "She is deliciously Southern, that's obvious enough! I really can't make out whether she is overshy or too shrewd to say a great deal about herself. I just went ahead and told her that even if she wouldn't talk about herself she must expect that everybody else in the city would talk about her—and she really seemed to be glad to know it. She's so delightfully pagan!"

The voice ceased and then began again, evidently replying to a question that had been put. "What do I mean? Why, she's a pagan, though she doesn't seem to realize it. In somebody else than in such a perfectly glorious creature her ways would be rude. However, we must forgive everything in a divinity. Am I not generous to one of my sex? But she refused to take the hand of Carlos Roccardi—she looked at his twisted mustache and shivered—actually! She turned away and wouldn't look at him. I asked her about it, after Carlos had shrugged his shoulders and was gone. She said she always let instinct rule her. Now isn't that pagan?"

Reba looked over her ice at Lang, and her gaze was so long and intent that he turned at last and faced her. He was very solemn and seemed to be striving with uncomfortable thoughts.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, as if her stare had affected him like some sort of intrusion upon reflections that he was hiding.

"I was merely wondering—wondering what the lady with the siren voice would have detected if she had intercepted that look the pagan gave you when you came to her this evening. If she allows instinct to rule her dislikes, I suppose the same quality attaches to her likes."

"I don't enjoy that sort of humor," he said roughly. "Trask's wife has about the same interest in me that I have in Trask's wife. And if you think it's more than surface interest and if you can be complacent enough to joke me, you hurt my feelings. Don't you know men any better than you seem to know 'em?"

"You haven't allowed me to know one man very well—that man being you!"

"You're too sure of me—that's the trouble. You take me for granted. There have been no tags hitched to me in the woman line. Confound it, Reba, I'm afraid that women don't really value a man unless he has been well advertised as a lover! Do you love Skiddy Trask, as you'd like to have me believe, for himself or for his reputation?"

She stiffened. "It isn't like you, John—that way of talking!"

"There you go! You think you know me so well that you have my ways and my manners all catalogued. I think the way to handle you, or any other woman is to keep 'em guessing. What'll you do, if I really make you jealous—or try to?"

"There's no telling what a woman will do, John," she replied placidly.

Again the high-pitched voice sounded over the rest of the sounds in the buffet.

"I'm quite sure that she has lived in the country districts in the South—not in any city. She knows too much about nature to be a city girl. She knows all about spiders!"

There was a pause, indicating the interjection of a question.

"Oh, I came early before the rush and I made it my way to talk with her. She says that lady spiders eat up the gentleman spiders when they get in the way. And she said it as if she believes that the plan is a mighty good one. There's a new-woman slogan for you! 'Be a spider! Eat 'em up.' "

There was much laughter which drowned out the strident tones.

"Do you care to stay longer, and dance?" Lang inquired.

"No, I think I have seen enough."

When he followed Reba in taking leave of the hostess, the girl-wife clung to his hand. "You give me courage—when I look at you," she said in low tones. "It's strange. It is so big in this world—I'm afraid."

"You have nothing to be afraid of—in your position, Mrs. Trask."

"I know now what they call you. You're 'Generous John!' "

"It's a silly nickname," he said impatiently and relaxed his fingers, but she continued her clutch of his hand. Old Double T was no longer at her side—men had cajoled him into the smoking room.

"Will you be my friend—always? Always willing to help me? You don't understand how I feel—but I saw you first of all the great folks when I came out of the —when I came from the South."

"I will help you to the limit of my powers, if ever you should need help in my line. You must remember that I am your husband's friend."

"It's a pledge!" Her eyes were now pleading with him. "And I know something else about you, Sir Knight. My husband says John Lang never broke his pledged word."

It was fairly early when he left Reba and her mother at their door. He decided to go to the Talisman Club.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SPECTER FROM THE NORTH.

Lang found the Talisman Club's lounge unusually well populated when he strolled in, and most of the men were in evening garb. He was promptly made aware, by jesting remarks that were interjected into the greetings given him, that these birds of a feather had merely skimmed through the Trask mansion that evening in order to have a peek at the bride and a peck at the food and to satisfy curiosity.

Lang endured the not too pointed humor tolerantly, though he did not smile.

"And the advance notices inform us that the title of your address to the Bar Association next week will be: 'The Ethics of Protection of Client by Counsel,' " said Larry Devon. "John, why didn't you practice what you're going to preach?"

Lang shook his head protestingly.

"The only sensible way of saving old Serenus," Devon insisted, "is to send for Skiddy, wherever it is he has gone, and have him do the Lochinvar act with the bride, even if it is a little late for the real romance of the thing. It's a job for a professional, and Skiddy has qualified!"

Even venerable Judge Cleaves, of the supreme bench, was provoked by the situation to shoot an arrow of humor with the rest.

"I really supposed that Serenus, as master of the Double T drives, had learned enough about the dangers of January freshets so that he would build his dams more strongly in the winter of old age. However," admitted the judge with an arch smile, "when pulchritude pleads its cause, common sense is often tongue-tied."

Larry Devon persisted in his own line of jest. "It's too bad that old Double T's nephew hasn't his regular business better organized, with a competent staff. Then the chief could have let an assistant attend to that job of eloping which Skiddy is on now, so that he could be free for this really important case. There's no telling what a new wife may do to an old will!"

Lang showed that he was nettled. "Why do you say that young Trask has eloped with anybody?"

"Well, hasn't he?"

Lang did not reply. He and Serenus Trask, the elder, had been discussing the puzzle of the nephew's absence; there had been a conference that very day in the lawyer's office. Trask had submitted to the attorney letters from the heiress of the Tulandic and the heiress frankly revealed that she was in a rebellious state of mind and was not in a mood to wait much longer for the fulfillment of the promise to deliver to her one wooer, guaranteed as able to give her social prestige. She confessed that she was nervous and irritable because, between a dancing master and a modiste, both imported from the city, she was "completely tuckered out."

"What else besides girls does Skiddy have for a business?" quizzed Devon.

The men who surrounded Lang were entirely absorbed in the mild baiting the lawyer was undergoing. Again Lang refrained from replying to Devon. But the jester was answered. The reply was in a falsetto that cracked and quavered with the emotion of a man who was near the extremity of mental strain.

"I'll 'tend to questions about my business

without any help from that damn, sneaking thief!"

There was not a man in the room who recognized the speaker as Skiddy Trask at first sight of him. In that interior of decorous elegance, contrasted with those men in evening clothes, the interloper presented a strange figure of jarring incongruity. He was apparently a rough lumberjack, bearded and shaggy. From his worn moccasins to the frayed Scotch cap that was aslant on his head, he was ragged and dirty. The fist that he was shaking at Lang was roughened and grimed by menial toil. When he drew his lips back from his yellow teeth blood showed because the lips had been cracked by exposure to the cold of the North woods.

"I have come, just as I am, to show you what you have made of me, John Lang. How do you like your work? You told me to come when I had real business with you. I'm here, damn you!"

Judge Cleaves walked out of the group of men, both his hands aloft in protest at this profanation of the sedate Talisman Club. The judge had finally recognized the intruder.

But the young man was not deterred by one who had formerly awed him in the club. Trask had come straight out of the winter woods; out of a hard school where blows and insults marked association with his fellows. Berserker rage, torched by many an hour of flaming meditation, was in him. And mania gleamed in his eyes.

"Get out of my way, you drooling old fool! I've got business with only one man here."

"Call the porters!" advised somebody.

Trask drove his hand into the breast of his faded Mackinaw jacket and pulled out a revolver. He began to rave and threatened those who sought to lay restraining hands on him.

"Just a moment, gentlemen!" Lang pushed his way close to Trask and the calmness of his demeanor and the evenness of his voice helped to quiet matters. He stood in front of the young man, serenely contemptuous regarding the threat of the revolver, turned his back on Trask and faced the club members. "I entreat the indulgence of the club, gentlemen. I feel that I'm partly responsible for this disturbance because Mr. Trask has come to me here on business. He and I will retire and attend to our affairs."

But Trask stepped back a few paces and raised his gun. "We'll talk that business here—here and now! You told me to come to you. Didn't you promise to listen?"

"I said I would listen when you had anything of importance to say to me."

"I'm a member of this club—my dues are paid—and I'm going to give these gentlemen a chance to decide whether what I've got to say is important or not. I'll shoot the man who tries to stop me. And after I'm done, go ahead and expel me. You don't dare to keep your promise and listen to me, John Lang! That's what's the matter with you!"

"I dare to listen!" The lawyer straightened; he surveyed his fellow members. "Gentlemen, it may save the situation from becoming worse if we allow Mr. Trask to say what he has to say to me, according to his own choice in the matter. He is much overwrought, it seems, and is armed."

The men nodded their agreement.

"I am keeping my promise to you, Mr. Trask," suggested the lawyer quietly. "Go ahead."

Trask brandished his weapon while he talked.

"I stood outside my uncle's house tonight in these rags. It was open to everybody—and I didn't dare to go in—and that's what you have done to me. You gave him law to make a slave of me, and you bragged that you had put the teeth into that law! Wasn't that your brag?"

"Yes!" admitted Lang, without emotion of any sort.

"He has made a will that leaves me one dollar—and you drew that will for him. Didn't you?"

"I did."

"My uncle made me what I am—he wouldn't let me be anything else than a loafer. You know he wouldn't!"

"I know it."

"Yes, you knew it—and you helped him make that will. And look at me! I stand here a pauper! And I had my one chance to be made decent, and you wouldn't help me to that chance. Would you help me? No! You stood up and told me that I could not have that chance. Didn't you tell me?"

"Yes!"

In the breathless silence men murmured—a note of wonder in their tones, as Trask went feverishly on.

"And even now you won't give me that

chance, will you? You won't ask my uncle to see the right way, and you won't do the one other thing that will give me back my happiness and start me on the way to make a man of myself. I can see by your damn, hard face that you won't do it—'Generous John!' "

"Trask, I have explained the whole thing calmly to you in the past—and you can't expect this play-acting trick to make a fool of me after my best judgment has influenced me to make up my mind for good and all."

"Play acting!" shrieked the other. "My God, Lang, haven't you eyes to see when a man is so earnest that it's life or death for him?"

"I'll talk with you when you are calmer, Trask."

"And talk the same as you have in the past, eh?"

"Undoubtedly! The conditions have not changed. They seem to be much worse," stated Lang, looking the ragged man up and down.

Trask slowly lowered the gun and aimed it at the lawyer. The men in the room gasped protest. The threatened target did not move.

"I'm not going to kill you, John Lang. But right in line with the aim of this gun I'm going to shoot something into you with my tongue. Let the word go out of this club—and it will—that you have made me what I am and wouldn't give me my chance. You've got a conscience, even if you haven't got any mercy. And that conscience is going to take you by the neck and put you onto your knees—onto your knees, Lang, just as I have been on my knees to you. Stay alive! I'm not sure that there's a hell hereafter. But I know there's one on this earth—I've been through it. Stay alive!"

He started toward the archway of the vestibule. He waved the revolver over his head.

"Stay alive!" he repeated over and over, in a sort of frenzy.

He paused in the archway and faced toward the clubmen who were distressed—even dismayed. "You have left me nothing to live for, Lang! But—stay alive! And see what it gets you!"

He jammed the revolver into a pocket and hurried out of the clubhouse.

"If it was anybody but Skiddy Trask I should say that some of his friends ought to follow him and stop him from committing suicide," averred Devon, the first to get his voice after Trask's dramatic departure. "But, somehow, you don't give Skiddy credit for having the courage."

"I don't think that the word courage is at all felicitous when used in connection with suicide," protested Judge Cleaves. He was surveying Lang with interest. The lawyer was showing less composure than he had displayed when he had been menaced by the gun. "If you are convinced that our friend, young Trask, is an utter coward, Devon, you ought to follow him and save him. Cowards kill themselves!"

But Devon lighted a cigarette and sat down.

"It's the brave man who plays out his hand, no matter what cards Fate has dealt," pursued the judge. "We know how shocking it would be for a petulant player to throw his whist hand on the floor in the cardroom, yonder. When a man blows out his own brains, he makes a great deal of trouble for other folks and dodges his own misfortunes. Brother Lang, I noticed that your legal training held you to answers of yes and no when you were on the stand, so to speak, a few moments ago. It was wise, perhaps. However, considering that you have been put in an unfavorable light by your disinclination to provoke an insane man to bring actual scandal upon the club, I'm sure that your friends will be glad to listen to any explanation you have to offer."

"I thank you, Judge Cleaves, but I do not feel that it is a case which should go to trial at this time—at any rate, not in the Talisman Club."

In spite of the calm tone in which Lang spoke, the judge reddened perceptibly and the listeners felt that the lawyer's retort was unjustifiably rude. Lang immediately walked out of the lounge, secured his hat and coat and left the building.

"There may be nothing in Skiddy's threats or laments," admitted Devon. "Most likely not, because his wits seem to be off the hooks entirely. But if there is, John Lang ought to be currying popular favor instead of turning the cold shoulder to it."

Judge Cleaves selected a cigar from his case, bit off the end and expelled the bit of tobacco with vigor. "If what Lang admitted to young Trask is any indication of the facts in the case, we ought to find Brother Lang's address to the bar associa-

tion particularly interesting, providing I recollect the nature of his subject. Is it not——" He hesitated, looking from face to face of the attorneys who were in the group.

"'The Ethics of Protection of Client by Counsel,'" stated Larry Devon ironically.

CHAPTER XV.

WHY THE MUSIC STOPPED.

While his club friends were mildly disparaging Lang's suitableness for the theme that had been assigned to him, the lawyer was putting those ethics of protection to a practical test. He was hastening in a cab to the mansion of the elder Trask, late as the hour was.

Lang had devised a twist bit, following the client's orders, and the bit was not operating according to expectations. It was a new Skiddy Trask who had come from somewhere out of the night. It was a wild colt who had reared and kicked recklessly in the Talisman Club.

Activities at the mansion were still in progress. There was music and the young folks were dancing. Departing guests were filtering out from the front entrance. Lang noted that there was plenty of opportunity if a desperate man wanted to invade the place. But his practical mind would not admit that young Trask was lunatic enough to attempt any sortie of violence on his uncle.

Lang reassured Serenus, the elder, on that point when they were closeted in Trask's den on the upper floor.

"So that's what he said, and that's how he looked, eh?" commented old Double T after Lang had succinctly reported on the affair at the club. "Did he say where he has been all this time?"

"In hell."

"Meaning, perhaps, that he has been up in the Tulandic and got a look at Maravista Blake when she didn't know it. But the thing is going through as I have planned it, Lang. He's back here where he can be handled. Use the twist bit."

Skiddy Trask had raved about a conscience—had conjured it up, as he would summon a demon. Lang was not especially troubled, but he threw a sop to that conscience. "You are absolutely set upon the Blake marriage, are you, sir?"

"Absolutely!" Trask brought down both palms on the arms of his chair. "And I am just as absolutely set against his making a fool of you, of himself and of that girl he has been trying to toll away from you. What's the matter with you, Lang?"

"We won't drag in that side of the thing, if you please!"

"It's already dragged in. I've attended to that. I've made it my business to ask some questions about the latest girl affair of my nephew's. He always has something of the kind on—and it was only a case of my finding out what it was. Lang, what do you suppose I'd do to a man who tried to cut in on the girl I had picked out? Gad, if you're getting weak enough to lie down in a case of love, next thing you'll be lying down in a case of law! Wake up!"

Neither of the men had heard the sound of the door when it was opened. The voice of Mrs. Trask startled them. "Was I wanted here?"

"No!" snapped old Double T before he had recovered his poise. Then his eyes moistened as he gazed on the charming picture that was framed in the doorway. "Yes, you are! You're always wanted by me, honey! Come here!" She went to his side and he put his arm about her, pulled her close to him and kissed her. Her side glance was with Lang while the old man pressed his lips to hers.

"And now trot along," commanded the husband, looking around at Lang and flaunting the triumph of one who was able to control and command this glorious creature. "But what made you think I wanted you?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I do." He squinted at her.

Lang was astonished when her forced smile was succeeded by an expression of terror.

"Well, for the love of—what—what are you scared about?" demanded Trask.

"I'm not frightened."

"I should hope not, when I'm only going to explain that it's only the little bird of love that's always telling you that I want you. I'm afraid this evening is rather too much strain for you. I'll send away those devilish fiddlers. It's getting on my nerves, too."

"No, no!" she pleaded. "Let them play a while. It's fun. And you will stay here in this room for a time, dear old husband?"

"Yes! I have business. Run along for now."

She hurried out and shut the door. Down

the corridor was her maid. Anita beckoned to her.

"And you're sure—sure that the man wants to see me—doesn't want my husband?"

"He's rough, like the men who come to see the master. But he says he has a message from the North woods for you—you alone, madam. So I told him to wait in the little sitting room." She indicated the door of the room, farther along the corridor.

Anita went slowly toward the door. When she reached it she held her hand on the knob for some moments. She noted that the maid was observing her. She impatiently waved dismissal and the maid went on her way.

While the servant was hurrying down a rear stairway she heard the door close behind her mistress. On the lower floor the maid accosted the butler who was bossing the caterers packing up in the serving room.

"That man who came in!" she whispered.

"I didn't pay any special attention. Who is he?"

"The mistress seemed frightened when she went to him. We'd better go and stand outside the door." There was a hint in her tone and manner. The two servants appeared to be very good friends.

"She seemed frightened, eh?" The butler narrowed his eyes. "Then you're right! We have had jobs in other places where we have cashed in on what we heard. We'd better go and stand outside the door."

In the den the lawyer and his client proceeded to consider the case of the intractable nephew. Trask's mood, in spite of what he had said about fiddlers, apparently was mellowed by the music from below, or softened by his recent scene with his girl-wife.

"Of course, Lang," he proceeded, after a period devoted to musing, "we've got to consider all sides of the thing. Love is a touchy mess to handle. I've found that much out late in life, and that girl you were beauing around to-night has probably made you feel the same way. I'm not changing my mind about my nephew marrying the Blake girl. That's business! The Double T and the Tulandic, hitched up together, make a property that's worth four times what they're worth divided. And he's carrying my name! The only Trask left!

"We've got to nurse this thing more or less. If I didn't know more about love than I used to know, I'd have had him standing with the Blake girl before a parson weeks ago. I'd held him by the scruff of the neck and choked him till he said yes and kissed the bride. But I'm a little lenient these days. He must come to the net, though! After the hook has been set, you've got to let your fish do about so much scooting and thrashing. We'll go ahead now and reel him in, Lang—reel him——" Then the old man leaped out of his chair. "Name o' hell, Lang, what's that?"

A firearm had cracked somewhere in the house. A moment later a woman screamed in the corridor.

Trask flung open the door of the den. His wife's maid was scampering toward him. Down the corridor the butler stood near a door at which he pointed his finger significantly when the master appeared. Lang ran along with Trask to the door, but allowed the latter to open it. He went in after Trask.

"Keep everybody away from here," the lawyer commanded the servant, and shut the door.

"Who is that—who's that man?" quavered Trask.

The man lay on the floor, face up.

"It's your nephew," stated the lawyer, remembering his own slow recognition of young Trask in the Talisman Club.

As he had done in the case of the stranger in the Brassua woods, Lang stepped forward to make an examination, showing no tremors. He exchanged looks with Mrs. Trask. She was huddled on a divan, peering at the lawyer from over her forearm which she held before her face. From the fingers of her lifted hand dangled a revolver.

Lang turned his back on her when he rose from his knees. He faced Trask. "I'm sorry—he's dead, sir!"

The girl on the divan had been making unintelligible sounds. They were exhalations of breath, hoarse, rattling gaspings.

The form of the old man seemed to slump in his evening clothes; the garments hung on him in folds. He doubled forward and staggered to and fro. Then, with his feet pounding heavily on the carpet, he lurched along to the divan and snatched the revolver from his wife's limp fingers.

"What are you doing with that thing? What has happened here?"

She fell face downward and pulled a cushion over her head. "He'll kill me! He'll

do what he threatened to do! He'll get up and kill me!"

The husband pulled off the pillow that was muffling her voice. "That poor boy is dead. He can't hurt you. Speak up. What has happened here?"

Lang touched Trask's arm. "I'd advise you to wait till she's calmer before you ask questions."

But the wife straightened up on the divan and clutched the men, both of them, with hands that shook as if with ague. She held the two close to her, sliding her hands into their grasp, welding her clasp with theirs. It was plain that she was fighting off hysteria. "I want to tell you now—now—now! I want you both to understand. He came and wanted to see me. I don't know him. Who is he?"

"He is your husband's nephew."

Her eyes filmed for an instant. "He said so. I didn't believe him. He threatened me. He pulled out a pistol. He said I must do as he told me to do. He said he would kill himself unless I promised. He held the pistol to his head. I don't know now—how—but perhaps he didn't mean to do it. But his hand was shaking—like mine are shaking now. And the pistol went off. He fell down!" Then she allowed her feelings to conquer her. She screamed.

"You'd better wait," Lang advised when the husband started to speak.

"I've got to know it all now, before I go crazy," the old man insisted. "You had the pistol in your hand. I took it away from you. How did it happen—that you had the pistol?"

"He fell. I was afraid he would get up and hurt me. He had threatened. I wanted to live. He moved and I was afraid he would get up, I tell you! I picked the revolver from the floor. Yes, that's how it happened."

"Where was it lying?" asked Trask.

"Right beside his hand—there on the floor." She released Trask's hand and pointed. "I was afraid he would take it and shoot me."

The husband gave Lang a sidelong look. "I'll put it back where she got it from. As I understand it, the law doesn't want any evidence disturbed." He laid the revolver carefully on the floor near the dead hand.

The wife had imprisoned Lang's hand in the frantic clutch of both of her own. He was obliged to unclasp her fingers one by one in order to free himself. He turned to watch Trask's disposition of the weapon but he made no comment.

"It's all right to do it, eh?" demanded the old man. "It's the law, isn't it?"

"Conditions must be left as they are until a medical examiner arrives, Mr. Trask."

"Then you and I must not say a word about my wife picking up the gun. It's terrible—terrible, Lang. But the poor girl had a right to protect herself."

"I thought he was getting up again," wailed Anita.

"Yes, the poor girl had the right to protect herself." Trask went over to the divan and sat down and took his wife in his arms. She hid her face against his breast. Trask looked over her head and caught Lang's eyes. "He made threats in the club about killing himself, didn't he?"

The lawyer hesitated.

"Speak up! Didn't he say before witnesses that he was going to commit suicide? You told me he threatened to do it."

"He said that I had left him nothing to live for, Mr. Trask."

"Well, the others heard him, didn't they?"

"He shouted it."

The attorney seemed to be weighing matters in his thoughts.

"You said that you would help me always—in everything. You said that to me to-night," Anita whimpered. "You are my true friend. When you tell them what he said to you they'll believe you."

Once more, under Trask's basilisk, demanding stare, Lang felt a sense of helpless rage at this woman's provoking methods of snarling a situation.

"It looks to me as if there are matters in my family that I haven't been let in on," remarked Trask with considerable insolence.

"Your wife is not herself, just now, as I have warned you, sir. You must take her to her room—away from this. And when she is calm she can explain, no doubt, that she and I exchanged a few jests this evening, at the reception, about my position as counsel and adviser to the Trasks. And I trust you'll both take my advice now. Help her to her room and stay with her, Mr. Trask. I'll handle matters, as your attorney."

He ushered them out.

Lang set the butler on guard at the door of the room of tragedy.

He went to the group of lingering guests

who had crowded on the main stairway, venturing as near the scene as they dared.

"I'm obliged to give you some very painful news. Mr. Trask's nephew arrived in the city to-night, showing by his dress and his actions and words that he was suffering from serious mental disturbance. He forced himself into the presence of Mrs. Trask and, though she is not sure that he really intended to use his weapon on himself, it was discharged, and he is dead."

"Then it's a case of suicide?" inquired one of the group.

"Undoubtedly."

Lang stood there at the top of the stairs until all had departed. By telephone he notified the medical examiner, the police and the newspapers. Lang received the reporters in the drawing-room, gave them a statement covering the affair and said that Mr. and Mrs. Trask were too unstrung by the tragic happening to be interviewed. The reporters were plainly not satisfied when Lang courteously informed them that he was not able to add anything further to what he had said. One of them talked for the others.

"The newspapers have had a tip—and that's before this suicide story broke for us—that you and young Trask had a run-in at the Talisman Club after he struck town. We have been trying to locate you or him."

"My suggestion to you is that a conversation between two men, at a club, no matter what the topic might have been, may prove to be delicate material to be handled by newspapers."

"That's right, sir—without something else for a hook to hang it on. This case here at the house seems to furnish the hook and we'd like a statement from you."

Lang knew well enough what the reporter was driving at but he hedged, asking the speaker to be more explicit.

"As we get the story, he said that he was desperate enough to kill himself, and accused you of being responsible for the fix he was in."

"Yes!" suggested Lang with rising inflection.

"You must have known him especially well, seeing that you two have been on a hunting trip together. Would you give it as your judgment that he was insane, and not responsible for what he said?"

"I am not an alienist."

"But you stand so high, Mr. Lang, that any man who said what he said about you must have been crazy."

"You must supply your own inferences. I have no statement to make."

"These nuts that get touched up with this persecutional mania can bring a lot of trouble onto innocent parties," suggested the reporter. "We'd like to say for you, on your statement, that you have not given the victim any cause for his wild talk that you wronged him."

Lang shook his head with decision.

"Now that he has killed himself we've got to print the whole story, club feature and all," persisted the newspaper man. "It leaves you open to cheap talk behind your back. You may as well protect yourself."

Lang showed temper. "I have never hidden behind living men—I'll not try to hide now behind a dead man. That's all I have to say about the case. Good night, gentlemen!"

He left them and went up to the chamber to which young Trask's body had been removed by orders of the medical examiner. Doctor Jephson was there.

"I'm reporting it as suicide, John. Of course, there's no doubt about it. The gun was held so close that the ear is peppered with powder marks. And his desperate talk to you at the club has been pretty well circulated! Too bad! But we doctors and lawyers do get it handed to us—and only for doing our duty!"

Just then, groping in the maze of his doubts, John Lang would have welcomed such a definition of duty as would furnish him with a practical basis for action.

The fact that Anita Trask held the lethal weapon when he entered the room was only trivial circumstantial evidence, as Lang looked at it. Skiddy Trask had displayed the demeanor of a man who contemplated suicide. He had motives for suicide—and Lang in his cases always employed the battering-ram of motive to break down the circumstantial evidence that the hireling sleuths built up against the accused whom he defended. That girl had no motive to prompt her to kill the nephew, the lawyer assured himself. He knew that the doting husband had told her about the new will which secured her interests.

Could a weak, frightened girl wrest a weapon from a desperate man? It was suicide! Lang knew all the reasons young Trask had for utter despair. But when the

lawyer admitted that it was suicide, the consciousness rankled in him that the newspaper man was right about the tongues that would wag.

The last words that Lang had heard Skiddy Trask utter this side the grave were, "Stay alive! And see what it gets you!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A WOMAN'S WHIM.

Lang set his jaws and purposed to meet the situation face to face, firm in his tracks, as he would have awaited the onrush of a charging moose in the forest.

He found that he was called on to battle with wasps. The rumors buzzed. He heard the sound of them. Every now and then one of the swarm ventured boldly to approach and sting.

For the first time in his life he found his choice of movements urging him to stay closely in his office; he was telling himself that he could not spare the time to go abroad—and he knew he was lying to his soul. It was the first indication that the foundation stone of his self-respect was being undermined.

He was finding that he was more at ease when he walked along the side streets instead of on the main thoroughfares. He informed himself that he did not care a continental how folks looked at him or what they said behind his back. But his man's pride answered him, whimpering under the lash, and almost confessed that it was vanity disguised and was not able to endure wounds.

After a time he kept away from the Talisman Club. Men were demurely polite to his face, but there was no more of the old copious outpouring of warm personal regard. There was a queer look in men's eyes.

Lang knew well what was captaining the wasps of rumor, and of disparagement, suspicion, rebuke and actual aspersion of motives. It was the ghost of young Trask! Not in the sense of an actual visitation. But around the personality of the victim had been flung the mystic garment of the awe of death—the white samite which human charity drapes over the imperfections of the flesh.

Skiddy Trask, when he was breathing, eating and loving, had been a weak ne'er-do-well whom any real man could scorn as an antagonist. But Skiddy Trask, after his sacrifice to despair, had become a potent force, though invisible. He was dealing sure and effective blows at pride, reputation, professional standing and peace of mind—and Lang could not strike back.

Lang even avoided Reba Donworth in spite of his despondent longing to be with her. He felt that he could confess to her his realization that he had dealt too harshly with a weak man. She understood the matter better than any one else. He was confessing to himself that he had been wrong—in limited measure. He had hoped that she would extend some sort of woman's sympathy. If her letter to him had been filled with bitter reproach he would have had an excuse to seek her for an explanation and a better understanding between them. But her letter had been calmly cold and judicial in her arraignment of him regarding his part in the tragedy of Skiddy Trask. She offered her pity to Lang, leaving it to his conscience to do the direct accusing.

And conscience did accuse; her letter was the prompting force.

Anger alternated with his grief. He had fought for his own, even if pride had been the mainspring of his efforts! When he was sorry, he did not feel like trying to set matters right with himself and the world; when he was angry, he had sense enough to keep from making a bad matter worse. He was fighting against a dead man and the world's derogatory opinion, and against his own conscience. "Stay alive! And see what it gets you!"

One day Serenus Trask called Lang on the telephone. He curtly commanded the lawyer to come out to the mansion.

"If it's business with me, you must come to my office, sir," Lang informed the client. He checked Trask's expostulations. "It isn't a matter of coddling my convenience, Mr. Trask. I'm avoiding situations that embarrass me—and you know what I mean. I have expressed myself in your presence."

When the client arrived in the office, coming posthaste, he glowered at the lawyer. "You didn't mean to intimate over the phone that my wife tries to flirt with you at my house, did you?"

"With all due respect to Mrs. Trask, her manner of joking puts me in an awkward position."

"Well, let it stand that way. I'm sure of her, where I'm concerned—and I'm not down here to talk about jokes." He flung

his fur coat across one chair and sat down in another. His expression changed from sour resentment to anxiety that was etched deeply into his wrinkles. "Lang, there's hell to pay at my house! I'm in danger of losing my mind, if things can't be straightened out there. I'm harboring thieves in my house, Lang. My wife has lost jewels—thousands of dollars' worth. My private safe has been robbed, not only once but several times. And I have the thieves dead to rights! I have done a little robbing on my own hook. I have broken open trunks and ripped mattresses. I have got back a lot of the loot, and I know just where I found it. It was in the rooms of Dudley, the butler, and my wife's maid, Rena."

"You surely don't need legal advice from me on a matter of that sort, Mr. Trask. It's a case for the police and the district attorney."

"It is, is it? By gad, it isn't—the way the thing stands," retorted Double T with violence. "My wife won't let me have those crooks arrested. She fairly wound herself around me, as tight as the warp on a snubbing post and made me promise her I wouldn't put 'em into the jug."

The lawyer pondered. "Mrs. Trask's way may be the better one, sir. You'll be avoiding this damnable newspaper notoriety."

"And another thing," burst out Trask, "my wife won't even stand for it to have the precious pair discharged—she made me promise that I won't discharge 'em."

"What reason does she give for that attitude?" Lang demanded, his interest stirred.

"About a thousand reasons!" raged the old man. "I can't remember them all. She hung onto my neck and kissed me till I couldn't breathe and she begged for 'em. Said she would reform 'em. I'm just about crazy. Dod whang it, Lang, do you think I can sit in my dining room and eat a meal of vittles with relish, having that damnation thief in front of my eyes or behind my back? What shall I do?"

"Be master in your own house, Mr. Trask."

"I can't go against Anita when she is as much worked up as she is now. She was in hysterics till she had swung me round." There was pitiful perturbation on Trask's countenance.

"Your wife is a rather high-strung person, isn't she?"

"Listen, Lang!" The old man leaned forward and spoke in a cautious undertone. "She isn't like common folks. No girl could have caught me, if she was just a girl and nothing else. There's something about her that isn't wholly human. I'm only an old woodsman, and I don't know how to put it in language—the thoughts I have about her. But aren't there women born—they aren't witches—that's a poor word—or—or well, I give it up! But they're born with a power, aren't they—some women—to make fools of the best of men?"

"I believe the poets do say so."

"I'm no poet," blurted Trask. "But I love that girl. I love her even when she doesn't notice me, but sits in a trance and looks up toward the sky and says she sees her lady mother of high degree. If she told me a fairy was her mother I guess I'd believe it. You have never noticed in her anything to hint that her mind isn't right, have you, Lang?" he pleaded earnestly.

"I must remind you that my acquaintance with Mrs. Trask is very limited."

"I love her," insisted the old husband. "I suppose it's love. It must be. But when she begged those renegades off she twisted herself around me. It wasn't like a man's wife asking something sensible—and being sensible while she asked it. I couldn't tell her no. I couldn't help myself. But I had an awful feeling as if I'd like to pry her away from me, same as I'd push off a snake. My God, Lang, I was—I—I was *afraid!*"

Trask "suffled" his breath with his blue lips.

When he had surveyed his client for some moments Long spoke. "You have been a master of men for a good many years, Mr. Trask. You are accustomed to command and to be obeyed. I'm going to talk very frankly to you—meaning no disrespect to your wife. But you must not allow her to control you as she is doing. It means breaking down the will power that has kept you well and strong in spite of your age. You will find yourself in an exasperated spirit of rebellion." Trask nodded affirmation. "You are apt to lose your mental poise."

"Go crazy?" gasped the old man.

"We won't put that name on it, if you please. But you mustn't permit any human being to do your thinking for you at your time of life. Your mind is your mainspring. Keep it wound up. Your wife seems to be indulging in a whim. All pretty women allow whims to sway them, without much re-

gard for the feelings of others. Mr. Trask, you go back home and kick those servants out of your house, and then you'll throw back your shoulders and feel ten years younger and you'll sleep well to-night."

"I can't do it. I promised her I wouldn't," bleated Trask.

"But you can't endure having 'em in the house any longer!"

"No!"

"Instruct me as your attorney to attend to their case."

"I can tell her that you insisted—as my lawyer."

"You may tell her that. I'll go along with you, right now. You simply keep Mrs. Trask in her room out of the way."

In the stone mansion, after the master had gone upstairs to attend to his part of the performance, Lang made a conference office of the dining room and summoned the butler and the maid before him. In a dozen curt words he expressed his opinion of them and discharged them, ordering them to leave the house at once. They showed no signs that they were abashed or contrite. Dudley spoke for both.

"Does madam know that we are being thrown out?"

"This is not madam's affair, my man. I am acting for your master."

"We have an understanding with madam," Dudley insisted.

"I don't recognize any such understanding. Get out!"

"We demand that madam be notified of what you're trying to do," said the butler insolently.

"What I'm *trying* to do!" echoed Lang with venom. For a long time his hands had been itching to meet something solid in the way of opposition, instead of that shadowy antagonist with whom he had been battling. He leaped for the man, seized him by the collar and swept him around in a circle on the floor. Then he raced Dudley through the rear part of the house and kicked him out by way of the tradesmen's door.

"I'll tell one of the servants to bring out your belongings. If you try to communicate with Mrs. Trask, now or hereafter, I'll have you in jail."

He informed the maid to the same effect, allowing her to go to her room under the escort of the mansion's man of all work, giving her a quarter of an hour to pack.

Lang sent for Trask after the premises were clear of the offending servants. He waited for the master at the foot of the main stairway. "They are gone, bag and baggage, Mr. Trask. I'm sorry you did not choose to have them arrested."

Then it was immediately plain that the wife did not intend to be left out of any colloquy between her husband and John Lang. The lawyer glanced up and saw her halfway down the stairs, where she had halted.

"You have not sent Dudley and Rena away!"

"I have. I assume the responsibility, Mrs. Trask. I prevailed on your husband."

"Send for them," she urged with frenzy. "Call them back."

"They can never enter this house again. If they try it, or molest you in any way, I shall have them arrested."

She descended two steps, beating her hands together. "You pledged that you would be my friend and helper. You did! You promised!"

"I have helped you in this matter."

"Help! Help!" Though she shrieked the words, she was not appealing. There was a frantic irony in her tones. She fell and rolled limply down the stairs, and lay motionless at their feet.

When she did not revive, they lifted her between them and carried her to the boudoir on the upper floor and laid her on a divan. Lang did not remain. He started for the door.

"You called it a whim. What do you call it now?" lamented the old man.

Lang had a trenchant phrase for use in the case of silly women who were determined to have their own way; but he went out of the house without confiding the description to the doting husband.

CHAPTER XVII.

EYES AND EARS.

An opportunity for an investment was offered to Serenus Skidmore Trask.

A man secured audience with him in his den in the stone mansion by making an appointment over the telephone. The man had assured him that this was a really exceptional opportunity for an investment! Trask was not especially impressed and was in the way of turning down the request for an interview. When he was curtly informing this solicitor-by-telephone that he was not

interested, the man's tone became urgent and significant. He declared that Mr. Trask would be very sorry if he did not look into this matter above all others!

Therefore, Serenus Trask permitted the man to come to the mansion and he looked into the proposition as far as the man would allow him to look. After the man had gone away Trask ordered his car and was driven in a rush to Lang's law office.

"I was in here two days ago and told you that hell was to pay out at my house! I'm here to-day to say that damnation has been added," raved the old man, unable to express the tumult of his emotions except by the emphasis of woods verbiage. Closeted with Lang in the private office, he stamped to and fro, clacking his hard fists together. "I ought to have known better than to have tied up with a woman, no matter who or what she was. I played my hunch of hating 'em—and I was all right till I got to be a blasted old fool. I have lost my grit and my grip—and I've lost the only relative who can carry down my name. It's on account of a woman, Lang—it's all due to a woman!"

When he began to lament the loss of his nephew he became calmer and sat down and surveyed Lang with a woebegone stare.

"I've got to see it through, I suppose, now that my hand has been set to the plow. I've got to save scandal and what little peace of mind is still left to me. An infernal rat came to me to-day, Lang, and he wants to sell me something. He says there are two witnesses—Dudley and that maid—who heard the talk between my wife and my nephew. Gad, Lang!" His larynx bulged and shuttled in his withered neck. "It's a terrible thing to put my tongue to! But he says they say my wife killed my nephew!"

"They're liars, Mr. Trask," Lang declared with reassuring earnestness. "It's only the familiar story of blackmail because you're rich and because certain circumstances help such renegades."

"Do you really think so?" Hope gleamed in Trask's dull eyes.

"It's mighty evident. What did the sneak ask for—how much?"

"One hundred thousand dollars. Said he was a lawyer representing Dudley and the woman."

"All going to show it's blackmail. They're offering to hide criminal evidence for pay."

"Is it evidence—is it a felony—did she kill——"

"No, no, Mr. Trask! Put it out of your mind that she could have done anything of the sort. She knew about your will—she had no motive—she could not have wrested that gun away from a man so wholly crazed as your nephew was that night."

"I want to believe it. But the rat told me that the butler and the maid didn't steal the jewels and rob my safe. My wife was paying 'em hush money, so they say—so the rat said."

"Naturally they'd say that."

"But she admits it—Anita says that she gave 'em the stuff." The sweat of agonized mental strain was trickling down the channels of the wrinkles on the old man's face. "Lang, I had to have courage from some source, after that man left the house—agreeing to give me time to think. I went to Anita. I wanted to hear her swear that they were liars. She does swear that she didn't kill my nephew—even though I found her with the gun in her hand. I did find her that way, Lang! What do you think about it?"

"Her statement seemed reasonable to me at the time," returned the lawyer, soothingly.

"But she admits that she gave 'em the money and the jewels. She said she did it for my sake. They had threatened to make up a lie about her, she told me. She knew I was old and loved her and was sorry for my nephew and she wanted to hold such awful trouble away from me, she said. Anything to keep their tongues still, she said, so that another bunch o' trouble wouldn't be sluiced on top of the first, and bury me. She seems to have the right idea of the thing, doesn't she, Lang?" He pleaded with tremulous eagerness, fortifying his faith in the girl. "But it was an awful foolish thing for her to do, without talking with me, first."

"She does seem to lack judgment in many things, Mr. Trask," admitted Lang dryly.

"But she's only a girl! She has never known any life except what she saw in the North woods, when I found her!" In the fervor of exculpation Trask had forgotten what he had told Lang about the girl's Southern origin. The husband remembered and gulped. "But I've got to be open and honest with you, Lang, from now on, so that you can help us. I did find her in the woods. I saved her from a hellion. She told me her story. I helped her get free from him—he is her brother. I gave her

the money to go to him and fix him forever —and he has left the country."

"I hope it's one case where fix-it money has really bought the goods for you, sir. But I place no faith in that method of handling scoundrels. It's only trying to put out a fire with kerosene."

"Then you don't think I'd better hush up those two with money?"

"Absolutely—positively—no! If you deal with them on that basis I'll drop your affairs, sir."

"And if I tell 'em to go to the devil, what then—what will you do?"

"I'll fight till the last legal ditch for you and Mrs. Trask. Stand up to them, sir! Tell them you won't be bled for one penny by liars. Tell them that you'll have 'em sent over the road for blackmail. Fight, Trask, fight!"

"All right! If you'll carry the burden of the thing, I'll fight. You're a good lawyer, Lang, a good lawyer! All of a sudden I'm feeling old—old!"

The lawyer looked on his client and saw that Trask was bent and shrunken. When the bridegroom had bought that "flock of suits," the art of the tailor had fitted a man who stood straight, complacent in his love and filled with authority as the head of the Double T. From the moment that he had slumped into the hanging folds of his evening garb, looking on the form of his dead namesake, Trask had been as Lang saw him then in the law office—merely a withered simulacrum of what Double T had been in the days of potent sway.

"It will be good to tell Anita what you say—she has a lot of faith in you, John Lang!" In that extremity of his troubles the husband had no more fire in him to supply the torch of jealousy. "But the fight seems to have gone all out of me. I'll send the rat to you. I'll leave it to you to tell him what's what!"

The go-between came to Lang the next day.

He was one Farnum, a disbarred lawyer, a flabby individual whom Lang knew and despised. Lang promptly threw down the gage of battle and reminded Farnum that a man with his record could not hope for mercy from the court when another charge of attempted extortion was brought.

"Oh, we don't intend to push the matter any more, so far as selling anything goes, if your side feels that way about it," stated Farnum. "If Trask doesn't want to buy something, to save his peace of mind and a wife, we say nothing more to him. Make the most out of it, if that's blackmail. But my parties heard a good deal through the keyhole, in addition to what they saw. You being confidential counsel, I suppose you know all about the inside of things in the Trask family." Farnum was showing the assurance of one who held something in reserve.

"I know enough to serve me."

"All about Mack Templeton, eh?"

He jabbed the query at Lang and the latter was not able to hide his surprise. Here seemed to be an angle that was entirely new.

"That was the name that started the trouble in the death room," persisted Farnum. "Wouldn't it be a wise notion to get Mrs. Trask to explain to you who Mack Templeton is before you let her case go before the grand jury?"

"I'll judge of the wisdom of that notion after you tell me how this Mack Templeton fits in."

But Farnum merely parried back with the statement that what he knew about Mack Templeton he was keeping to himself. "Ask the lady—she knows. And she'll probably give you a reason why it's better to buy than to bluster in this case."

Farnum's shifty tactics indicated that he had only imperfect knowledge, at the most, and was endeavoring to work a "shoestring bluff," as Lang termed it in his thoughts. He tried on a little bluff of his own, keenly observing his man.

"I thought I'd give you a chance to hand me your version of who Mack Templeton is, so that I might judge the general value of what you are trying to sell. I see you can't tell me." Lang took a flyer, working on the admission that Trask had made regarding a persecutor in the shape of a brother. "Information that is squeezed through a keyhole is pretty thin stuff, Farnum. Mr. Trask knows all about his wife's family, including that brother, so you may as well throw away that ammunition; it's spoiled."

The bluff had worked; Farnum's face showed that Mack Templeton's value as a weapon, no matter what the keyhole revelations had promised, was much diminished.

"All right! Let the thing go to the grand jury." Farnum rose. "A lot of trouble

could have been saved by using a little cash in a sensible way." He went out slowly—waiting at the door to give Lang a chance to suggest a compromise. The lawyer turned his back, and Farnum departed.

Lang gave no heed to Farnum's threat that the case would be presented to the grand jury. It was a death which had been officially labeled as suicide. There was no motive to prompt that girl-wife to kill her husband's namesake nephew on sight. Accusation of a young and beautiful woman in Mrs. Trask's position would receive little consideration in the district attorney's office, Lang was certain. And he was more certain that they who had attempted to blackmail would not dare to accuse. He did not make any inquiries in the Trask family regarding one Mack Templeton. He was not interested in that person.

But, after a time, Lang became aware of a certain ominous stirring under the surface of matters in the law courts. There's a grapevine telephone in legal circles in any city. When Lang had become partially convinced that certain things were so, in spite of his past skepticism as to possible procedure, he went to see the district attorney, though on account of Lang's triumphs as a regular champion of parties accused he was not on very good terms with the prosecutor whom he had outwitted so often.

Lang was precipitately blunt. "I don't expect that you're going to tell me the secrets of your office, Wilkinson. I'm not here to ask questions. I'm here on account of a tip. Somebody says that you're thinking of digging up the Trask suicide case. As you know, I was in the Trask mansion that night and I have personal knowledge to back me. You're depending on two witnesses."

"Possibly more," drawled Wilkinson.

"Is it also possible that you're seriously thinking of bringing the case before the grand jury?"

"I thought you said you didn't intend to ask questions."

"I beg your pardon! I'm going to tell you that those two witnesses have attempted to blackmail the Trask family on account of the case."

"You're sure of that?"

"I am."

"You don't love the district attorney's office, *do* you, Lang? Why didn't you turn in your evidence and have such rascals prosecuted?"

"I defend—I don't prosecute. It's a wicked thing, Wilkinson, to attack the reputation of a woman and the happiness of a home on any evidence such knaves can give in."

"The knaves, as you call them, Brother Lang, are not yet on trial, thanks to your reticence. But whatever their moral character may be, they are human beings, with eyes and ears, and as such are capable of being witnesses."

The prosecutor broke in on more protestation from Lang. "Just a moment before we get into too heated argument, Lang, about what's right or wrong or possible of proof. I'm not going to act in this matter, admitting that I may act, out of any savage desire to break up a home or persecute a woman. But this thing is getting out of my hands—and out of yours, too. Somebody has been leaking. Somebody has been slipping just enough to the newspapers to start 'em digging around the edges. It may be Farnum's fine hand—I see you know that skunk just as well as I do. But you know the newspapers, too!"

Lang offered the comment of a grunt.

"When the newspapers can't print the whole, they're quite likely to hint at a little, in order to start things," the prosecutor went on. "And if the thing goes far enough, and I don't act, what's the answer?"

"No one can impugn your motives for giving decent people a square deal, when they're attacked by blackmailers who are going after revenge because they have been turned down."

The district attorney shook his finger at Lang. "Don't you believe it, Lang—not when a millionaire like Serenus Trask is in the case! We have an election in this State this year. I don't propose to run the chance of having 'em sneer behind my back that I have taken money to keep a millionaire's wife out of court. If she is innocent and is the victim of slander, she'll be better off when she has been cleaned and acquitted."

"You have taken me farther into your confidence than I expected to be taken, Wilkinson. I thank you!" said Lang coldly. "Now that you have been so frank in admitting what your real motives are in trying the case, I understand that it's wholly useless for me to argue further. Go ahead and get your advertising."

He was at the door when the district attorney spoke. "Just a moment, Lang. If this case does come to trial are you going to appear for the defense?"

"I am."

"I'm much obliged for your advice to me to go ahead and get advertising. In the way of gratitude I'm going to advise you to keep out of the case. The advertising you'll get won't help you."

"Do you think that I'm afraid of the damnable hornets that have been buzzing behind my back? No! Nor of one who buzzes before my face!"

"I was sort of honest in what I just said, Lang. If you go in and defend a woman who is accused of killing Skiddy Trask, you're going to get an awful tongue razooing."

"You go ahead, Wilkinson, and have her indicted." He came back a few steps into the room and shook an admonitory finger. Here was one of those who used a knife that young Trask had whetted in the shadows of death. "By the gods, I'll have her acquitted!"

"All right! The fight is on!" was the prosecutor's grim acceptance of the challenge. The two legal gladiators had set foot to foot and shield to shield and proposed to fight their battle, even if the trophy of the conflict, Anita Trask, were trampled into the mire as they fought.

The wheel of events began to whirl.

The grand jury returned an indictment against Anita Trask, charging her with the murder of Serenus Skidmore Trask, the second. She was held without bail for trial at the April assizes.

Though her arrest made a tremendous sensation the astonishment of the public had been discounted in some measure. Tongues had been busy. Slander had attributed sinister motives to this girl who had come out of nowhere. People did not know about the new will of Serenus Trask, the elder. It was evident enough that this dazzling beauty had married a man like Trask for his money. The natural corollary seemed to be that to this desperate venture she was willing to add murder of the blood heir in order to secure that money to herself. Human nature is too ready to credit abominable suspicions. There was a well-circulated rumor that her mind was not just right, anyway. The spider story was dressed up as a declaration of Anita's code in the case of men.

John Lang was amazed to find that even so discriminating and fair a man as Judge Cleaves had been inoculated with the virus of the popular feeling against the accused woman. The judge said as much to Lang in the Talisman Club. Lang had resumed in some degree his club relations, almost in bravado.

"Though the question of her guilt, as it appears, is not the point I desired to make when I brought the subject up!" pursued the judge, "I want to remonstrate with you, Brother Lang, for undertaking the defense."

"I could not do otherwise, considering my relations with Serenus Trask."

"But from the point of professional ethics it is equally necessary to consider what were your relations with the nephew of Serenus Trask. Frankly, you cannot afford to defy public opinion to this extent."

"I shall defend Mrs. Trask. My word is pledged, sir."

"But the prejudices you'll stir up may injure her cause as much as they may harm your career. Be sensible, Lang. Show more delicacy. Even if we call your stand by no harsher name than bad taste—a flaunting display of it affects a professional man to his hurt."

"I shall defend Mrs. Trask—even if I'm obliged to take to the woods for the rest of my life after I have secured her acquittal," declared the attorney.

He bowed and walked away from the jurist.

Though there was a finality of decision in Lang's assertion, there was none of that ironical curtness which had offended the judge on a previous occasion in the club. The attorney had replied rather mildly and had shown deep feeling. Some of his sentiments in regard to Anita Trask had been considerably modified.

As her counsel he had been obliged to interview her frequently, always in the presence of her husband.

He was obliged to break to her the news of her impending arrest. Having made, as he thought, a fairly accurate estimate of her emotional character, as she had shown it in the affair of the butler and the maid when Lang had brought that matter to a climax, the counsel had prepared himself for a real ordeal. He had even counseled Trask to have a physician in waiting.

But there was only a pathetic drooping of the red lips of the girl-wife. "Yes! I have thought it all over. I supposed they would go away and lie. I tried to pay them not to lie. You say I was wrong. Yes! I don't understand such things very well. But you will help me, Sir Knight. After this I will not try to do anything for myself."

In all the other interviews she was the same—resigned, but hopeful—sorrowful, but unafraid, ingenuously trusting in his powers, surrendering everything into his keeping as her approved champion. It was like a child trustfully going through a dark lane, confiding in a hand of strength in which her fingers were clasped. His sense of chivalry was stirred. He could not explain his feelings to any man, even to such a charitable man as Judge Cleaves. He could only hide the steel of his determination under the velvet of politeness, knowing all the time that he was being blamed for obduracy, understanding that the tongue of scandal was busy.

Trask's wealth secured many comforts for his wife in the house of detention. Much was accomplished in hiding the things which suggested restraint. But repeatedly she went to the window and pulled aside the draperies and touched with piteous fumblings the bars which made a captive of her.

The first time she did that the old husband screwed up his wrinkled face and wept with the frank abandon of a child. It is not a pleasant sight when an old man blubbers. "I found her in the woods, Lang! Just like a beautiful bird! And this is how they have caged her. Oh, my God, it's awful!"

"We'll have her out, Mr. Trask. I promise you that!"

"Yes!" agreed the wife. "We leave it all to you, I am safe. It's only a dark night, now. I have slept under a tree all night, often, so that I could see how pretty the morning was when the sun came up. It'll be morning very soon, and it will be prettier because the night has been so dark."

"I'm not crying because I'm afraid for you, with Lang on the job," averred the husband, trying to reassure her by apology for breaking down. "I'm crying because Skiddy is dead. I'm missing him dreadfully these days."

It was apology—excuse, but there was a great deal of feeling in the declaration, nevertheless.

TO BE CONTINUED.

ONE SENATOR'S MIND

SOON after Mr. Harding was nominated for the presidency, he announced that he would formulate his policies after conferring with the "best minds" of the country —and to this day the wits in Washington derive much amusement from drawing up lists of the "best minds."

Last May, when Mr. Blair was nominated by the president as commissioner of internal revenue, Senator Hiram Johnson, just beaten for the presidential nomination in Chicago, stated publicly that he would oppose confirmation of the appointment in the Senate.

"I wonder what's the matter with Johnson," ruminated a member of the House, during a pause in the cloakroom gossip.

"Well, you see," explained another member, "he's not among the White House pets; he's one of the bested minds."

Pen Shots of Champions

By Grantland Rice

V.—STANISLAUS ZBYSZKO

Heavyweight Wrestling Champion

A large and burly citizen
As bald as any fish,
In fact a trifle balder than
The bottom of a dish.
A head that breaks the head lock well,
Because no grip remains
Unless the head lock's fitted out
With antiskidding chains.
The harder rivals press his bean
With head-encircling grip,
The more they put the pressure on,
The quicker it must slip.

No vibrant youth, he takes his bow
Before the ringing cheers,
But rather one who's kidded Time
For nearly fifty years.
Beyond the fringe of middle age
He leaves a trail of wrecks
By standing youthful behemoths
Upon their brawny necks.
He may be bald and portly
And as old as any ark,
But he is not a person
One would pick on in the dark.

Stanislaus Zbyszko, heavyweight wrestling champion of the world, is also the greatest heavyweight contradiction.

Wrestling is one of the most surpassing physical tests in sport. It calls for unusual strength, great agility, ability to take punishment and enduring stamina.

So one would hardly visualize a wrestling champion as a portly, thickset, bald-headed citizen of forty-seven years.

That's the first upset.

After this, one wouldn't often figure that the two main hobbies of a heavyweight wrestling champion were music and literature. So once again Zbyszko tosses the monkey wrench into one's imagination.

For it so happens that the present champion, with his main professional duties over, is all inclined in the direction of these two highbrow side lines.

Tale of Two Brothers

The story of the two Zbyszkos is one of the most interesting in sport.

Their careers began back in Poland where Stanislaus was the first to take up the wrestling game. His younger brother, Wladlek, was a musician of promise as well as an accomplished linguist. It was over the keen protest of the elder brother that Wladlek took up professional wrestling.

Being arrayed in wonderful physical proportions, the younger Zbyszko moved rapidly up the wrestling ladder, still maintaining his interest in the violin and the piano.

In the meanwhile the elder Zbyszko, after beating every wrestler of note in the United States except Frank Gotch, his only conqueror, had returned to Europe, still highly displeased with his brother's choice of a profession. When the young Zbyszko failed to get by Stecher and "Strangler" Lewis Stanislaus made his preparations to return to America.

Few believed he had any chance to ever regain the top. He had been at his prime over twelve years ago when Gotch was the main mogul of the mat.

Caught in Poland at the outbreak of the World War the elder wrestler was interned. Considering his lack of practice for four years and his advance well into middle age the odds against his beating Stecher and Lewis seemed to be insurmountable.

After reaching the United States he went into instant training, challenging Stecher, the Human Python, first. But Zbyszko then was forty-six years old, bald and apparently too far beyond his prime to face any such competition.

In His Favor

It so happened there were three things in his favor. As a starter, he was a master of the mat game, one of the best that ever lived. In the second place, he was still, at forty-six, one of the strongest men in the world, stronger than any man in the game. In the third place, he had always taken fine care of himself and so had remained in fine condition.

Even after his long absence from the ring he was like a section of steel, as hard as granite.

To the astonishment of the sporting world a year ago he first threw Stecher, ex-champion, considered by many one of the great wrestlers of all time. The famous scissors hold was ineffectual when applied to a giant body that could tear even Stecher's powerful legs apart.

He followed this up by beating Lewis in one of the most spectacular wrestling bouts of many years, and only a short while ago at the age of forty-seven, defended his title against Lewis.

All through his training Zbyszko broke the long grind by devotion to his two main hobbies, music and literature. The younger Zbyszko speaks five languages fluently and the elder speaks four. Both are close friends of Paderewski, the world-famous pianist. Both play the piano and violin far above the average of those established in the amateur musical world.

In addition to his love for and proficiency in music the heavyweight wrestling champion is an inveterate reader of the classics. He is also keenly fond of opera, seldom missing a chance to hear any of the noted singers.

Here we have one of the rarities of sport, an unusual entry in the wide whirl of unusual things.

For it has remained for the massive Pole to prove that a man at forty-seven can hold his own with the best in the world at one of the most rugged of all sports. Few believed that Zbyszko could keep his great strength going after the first hour, but in winning the championship he proved to be as strong after two hours' terrific tussling as he was at the start.

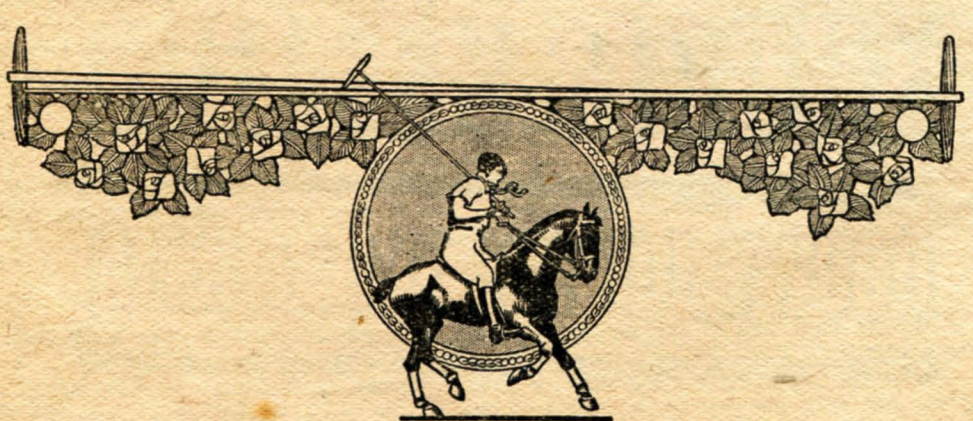
Only a man who had lived an exceptionally clean life could, at the age of forty-six, have endured the long sieges necessary to overcome two such stars as Stecher and Lewis, both in their wrestling prime.

Zbyszko is the oldest champion on record in a major sport. He is older than Fitzsimmons was when he lost the title by many years. He is older than "Pop" Anson was when the Chicago star finally retired from the major leagues after twenty-two years of service. He is older than Wagner and Lajoie were when they were finally forced to turn in their cleated shoes. No other wrestler or boxer at this age has been even close to the top, having long since either passed into retirement or else fallen far away as a has-been without a chance.

It only goes to show how far a fine mind and a fine body, when well trained and taken care of, can go in this fickle existence. Even with his great strength conceded, the possession of a keen intelligence was needed to overcome the lack of youth. Zbyszko used his head as well as his arms and legs and body in each bout, and the result is that in addition to being champion near the half-century mark he has lost but one match in his entire career.

Though Poland may be sorely pressed,
And up against it at the test,
One son at least has held the pace,
Regardless of both Time and Place.

It is Zbyszko's ambition to be wrestling champion at fifty. But in the interim Old Doc Time has entered the lists against him, outraged that so little attention has been paid to his beckoning finger. And the Old Doc is the toughest opponent of them all.



Smoke-Wagon Moves In

By Ralph E. Mooney

Author of "Nightmare Jones," "Pocahontas Brilling," Etc.

It was strange how much the mountains of Kentucky had in common with the Falstaff Café of St. Louis for "Smoke-wagon" Hackett

SHORTLY after midnight the southbound local settled to normal running somewhere below the Kentucky line. "Smoke-wagon" Hackett crouched in the narrow gangway of a sleeping car, listening to the conversation of a group of men in the smoking compartment.

"Did he get off at the bluff?" asked one.

"No," replied a man in authority. "Only two got off there and the chief recognized them both. We'll go straight through now and nail him. There's no stop for forty-five minutes."

Whereupon Smoke-wagon Hackett made his way to the vestibule. Methodically and with no waste of motion he set himself to raising one of the sections of platform which covered the car steps. As soon as the opening was wide enough to admit his body he crushed himself through it, clinging to the handrail. He jerked the flooring down upon his bent shoulders and squatted upon the bottom step, blinking into the rush of dust and cinders. Some one spoke loudly above him and a hand caught at the platform trap, the fingers brushing his arm. Upon the instant, with stolid disregard for the consequences, he dove outward.

There came a swish in his ears, a biting at his hands and chin, a sudden, numbing thump. He was conscious of rolling over many times. For a moment the world throbbed and dazzling lights grew and waned within his brain. Then he found himself upon his hands and knees, at the foot of an embankment. He placed himself with his back against the incline and closed his eyes.

A gentle breeze bearing the odor of sun-dried vegetation struck his nostrils. He gasped it in with a sensation of pleasure. Then he became aware of the vast uproar of a summer night. Insects, large and small, were grating harsh calls in furious competition with a chorus of frogs of all voices. Hackett decided that he was out of his head. Gradually, however, things came right and he arose, unsteady as he was, to look after the train. He was not surprised to find it stopped several hundred yards down the track. Men with lanterns were coming back for him and their voices were audible.

Hackett began walking away from the rail line. He came to a fence, climbed it and blundered off through a field of growing corn, shrinking in dismay from the rustling, clutching leaves which impeded him in an uncanny way. His movements were weak at first but his strength returned to him rapidly. He was too much man of action, too little of thinking being, for shocks and bruises to have more than local effect upon his rubbery muscles. Furthermore, the pressure of fear was upon him. The men behind had instructions to get him at any cost.

Upon the preceding evening the electric lamps of the Falstaff Café in the city of St. Louis had shone upon trouble of an epic sort. The Cuckoos, being in political favor, had fallen upon Smoke-wagon Hackett's gang, which had lost political favor, and had exterminated it. Hackett, at the last minute, had fought his way out of a corner, destroying all who hindered him, and so had managed to escape with his life. Which meant that a man who was a master craftsman with the smoke wagon or gat, a past master in rough work and apelike fighting, was exiled from the city for years to come. His enemies were in the ascendant and his death was demanded by all gang land and by the police as well. There was not even hope of the slight protection of Lenny Brown this time, for Lenny Brown's power as a politician was ended. He had been killed at the first fire, bumped off by "Cuckoo" Wyatt.

It is customary to apologize for such men.

Jack Hackett needs no extenuation. He was no more than a stalwart being who loved combat. For him there could have been no life save that of victory and wassail; of long days resting upon his laurels, and brief, hot moments of action. His face, low-browed and square with humorous insolence in the set of the lips was made to bear scars. Born in slightly better circumstances, he would have gone on the police force or might, by a long chance, have taken to soldiering. Born of wealthy parents, he would have ridden brute horses and most probably would have been an aviator long before the war. Born three doors from Ninth Street and Cass Avenue, St. Louis, he had become a gang leader.

Jack crossed the cornfield. Surmounting another fence, he passed through a herd of softly snorting cows, who removed themselves from him with brief, lumbering rushes and who kept their heads turned toward him. Somewhere in the distance a dog barked faintly. He crossed a third fence and went sliding down a four-foot embankment into water. A lump arose in his throat but he plunged ahead and found the stream to be little more than three yards across. Beyond it was a tangle of underbrush, a confusion of trees and at last a road. With a sigh—he was past all profanity, all language of any sort—he struck out along it, watching eagerly for a crossroad that would take him farther from the railway.

Meanwhile the detectives from the train were gingerly making their way into the corn. They dared not proceed rapidly. Jack Hackett's ability with the smoke wagon or gat or canister, as the weapon is sometimes called, was too well known.

When day broke, forty-eight hours later, Hackett drifted out of deep, primitive sleep to find himself lying upon an abruptly sloping hillside. Several hundred yards overhead, showing faintly through deep masses of silent trees was a bald, clay summit. At his feet was the road which had brought him to his resting place, a wandering, rain-washed trail. Across it another hill arose. At the roadside were Jimson weed and plaintain with dust and large drops of dew upon their leaves. Above him, shreds of mist hung in the foliage. Leaves fell occasionally and occasionally there was a flutter of wings among the branches.

While he demolished a small supply of dried bread and grease-coated bacon, he attempted to compute his whereabouts. He had come this way upon the advice of a woman he had found near a little lumber town in the lowlands. Let him go forty miles into the hills, she had said, and they would never find him. Well, he had come to the hills thirty-six hours before. Since then he had walked, say, fifteen hours all told. Even at two miles an hour that meant thirty miles. Five hours more of walking should mean entire safety.

Rolling and lighting a cigarette, he betook himself to the road. More than five hours passed. Finally, panting and perspiring in the growing heat, he found himself upon the lip of an oval, craterlike valley. Afar, in the center of the crater, he discovered a cluster of a dozen or more buildings. Instantly fatigue left him and he pressed forward with a twisted smile. Human beings. People to talk to. He'd been practically alone for four days now. He swung down the road whistling a late jazz number. He began to observe, with some satisfaction, the masses of foliage, the white dandelion tufts on the grass and the curling, half-dried leaves of August, floating lightly upon the breeze.

At half past eleven he made entry into the village. It was not as pleasant at close range as from a distance. It wore an appearance of arrested development, which it came by naturally, for this was the community known as Big Spring Settlement and in most things it was fifty to one hundred years behind the times. Long torn by fierce feud fighting, long constrained by narrowness and human cruelty of a medieval sort, it remained, in the twentieth century, a sort of free town of the feudal era. The weather-worn frame shacks were set hundreds of yards apart—a straggling line of them—some perched here and there on banks above the road and a few placed in small level plots at its edge. As Jack passed the first dwelling, a hullabaloo of children and dogs brought a woman to the door. Because of the heat she was clad only in an apron and was barefoot. Gasping, Jack Hackett hurried on. What was this, anyhow?

Then he came upon a man who was tethered to a tree by a huge chain. As he stared, the unfortunate creature uttered a babble of maniacal gibberish and again Jack fled. The inhuman condition of the lunatic, together with the appearance of the

half-dressed woman, caused him to realize that he was in a new world, devoid of all custom he had known. The realization aroused vague apprehensions.

In the center of the settlement he found a general store facing a dilapidated, half-wrecked church building. Rather uncertainly he stepped past an owlish individual who sat on the edge of the platform before the store and went inside. A small man appeared behind a counter of planking. After a moment of scrutiny Hackett was emboldened by the fact that the store man's uncertainty seemed to equal his own.

"Say," he began, "what you got——"

"Good morning, stranger," interrupted the proprietor, bowing and tittering.

"Good morning," replied Jack, taken aback. "What you got to eat?"

The store man was confused.

"Why," he replied, while Jack listened closely in order to get the right of his twanging drawl, "pretty near everything, I guess. Pork and potatoes and eggs—what you want?"

"Anything ready to eat," replied Jack. "Something to put under my belt right now. Get me?"

The store man quite obviously did not get him. Jack spoke too rapidly and from habit bit off his words, thrusting the remnants through the most convenient corner of his mouth. His eye, wandering over the miscellany of the stock, fell upon a cheese.

"Cheese!" he cried in delight. "That's the dope. Hand me out a sand'idge on rye, buddy!"

"Rye?" queried the storekeeper. "I—I got crackers."

"Crackers then," agreed Hackett. "Make it snappy, will you?"

Moving in obvious bewilderment, the storekeeper cut the cheese, produced crackers and tendered them to Jack, after first wrapping them carefully in ancient, time-yellowed newspaper. Hackett frowned.

"Say," he asked, "can't I eat 'em here?"

"Why—why, yes, sir, I guess so."

Placing himself upon a barrel Jack ate ravenously. After a time he turned to the storekeeper a changed man. Good humor beamed from his eye and complacence wagged his tongue.

"I expect a man wouldn't have a hard time getting a drink around here?" he insinuated.

The storekeeper's nervousness increased.

"Drink?" he replied. "Yes, there's water outside at the spring."

"Water?" chuckled Jack, displaying a dollar. "You're good. Say, ain't I in the mountains where the old original white mule comes from?"

"No, sir," replied the storekeeper, working himself toward the rear of the building. "I don't know nothing about that."

Jack was surprised.

"D'you mean to say you got prohibition way out here—hey!"

The storekeeper had succeeded in fidgeting himself to a door in the rear partition and had promptly disappeared. Left alone, Jack stared about him.

"Good night!" he exclaimed, after a moment.

The little store contained a few cans of beans, a barrel of thick crackers similar to those he had just eaten and a small stock of household goods arranged in pairs. There were two each of buckets, large and small, two brooms, two lanterns, two washtubs and a fairly extensive stock of twin building and digging tools—all covered with a light coating of dust.

"The backwoods right!" muttered Jack. "The back of the backwoods. What'll I do to wake this place up?"

He was not long in finding that he had already aroused the community in a most undesirable way. Jocose strangers who asked sly questions about moonshine whisky were not welcome in Big Spring Settlement. The door at the rear of the store opened and half a dozen men came in, making directly toward him. He noted with some alarm that each bore a rifle and that their manner as a group was menacing. The leader, a huge, broad-shouldered man with a straggling, youthful beard, placed himself squarely in front of Jack.

"Hello, stranger," he greeted. "What might you be doing here?"

Jack Hackett replied readily enough.

"Why," he smiled, "I thought I'd settle up here for a while. I got out of work and I thought I'd come this way and see what I could find."

As he spoke he perceived with growing alarm that his story, carefully planned on the road, wouldn't do. Suspicion was obvious in the big mountaineer's manner. The man must be a sheriff or a hick marshal, thought Jack, and he must have been warned to look for Smoke-wagon Hackett. Jack

was edging forward a little to get his pistol into play when the big man spoke solemnly.

"Stranger, there's no work here. You'd better move on."

Jack chuckled. Suspected of vagrancy. That was easy.

"Wait a minute, sheriff," he parleyed. "I'm no bum. I got money. All I want to do is settle down and live quiet."

The big man pointed to the door with the muzzle of his rifle.

"This is no place fer foreigners," he growled. "Git out."

"Foreigner!" protested Jack. "What you take me for? Listen, I'm from—New York."

"Git!" commanded the big man, cocking his rifle.

Half a dozen hammers clicked in unison. Jack arose promptly.

"The argument is over," he announced. "I'm gone."

He passed out the door uneasily aware of the muzzles bearing upon his back. With a sigh he turned toward the mountains again.

"T'other way," commanded the big man.

Jack winced.

"That's the way I came," he explained.

The mountaineer's companions laughed boisterously.

"That's the way you go, too," was the reply. "The lowlands is the best place fer foreigners—and revenues."

With a desperate shrug of his shoulders Jack set off along the road. His pace was hastened as he reached a turn by the sharp crack of a rifle and the snap of a bullet close to his head. Thereafter he was alone on the deserted road with his inbound footprints to remind him of the long way he must retrace. The ridge before him rose abruptly as a wall. The low mountains to which it was joined made the valley like a jail yard. If he stayed in it—alone—he would go mad and they would chain him to a tree. If he went back to the lowlands, as directed, he would be compelled to dodge through to the rail line and then dodge south, riding the bumpers. And, at any time, a chance arrest by a railroad detective or a hick sheriff would mean return to St. Louis—and death.

He came to a stop at a point where a small spring stream flowed across the road. Removing his shoes and the remnants of his socks he thrust his feet into the water and, with a gasp at the biting caress of the cold fluid, lay back and closed his eyes. Jack Hackett was near his finish. There was no place in the United States, no place in the world for him. What a shame he had made such a nice get-away. What a shame they hadn't croaked him at the Falstaff. He was not built for the road. He was made for social activity and recreation, games and pastimes, with a little excitement like a good gun fight thrown in. His natural position in the world was that of a leader. If he couldn't have it, he was better dead.

As he reached this conclusion, a slight noise disturbed him. He opened his eyes and beheld a girl standing amid the bushes across the stream. A convulsion of nerves brought him up and he sat rubbing his eyes and staring at her. After a moment she came forward a few feet. He was glad to note that she was fully clothed and wore shoes. Also that she was dubiously trying to smile. Instantly his well-known gallantry for the ladies asserted itself and his troubles were forgotten. Jack Hackett lived for the most part in the present. Past and future could not long affect him.

"Hello," he greeted sweetly.

"Hello, stranger," replied the girl.

"Who? Me? I'm no stranger. I'm your best friend."

The girl wriggled and took a step back. Hackett, observing her brown eyes, direct and somewhat childish in their expression, her sun-tanned cheeks and the primitive, strong lines of her figure, smiled warm approval for her. He reached for his footgear and made haste to put it on.

"'Scuse me," he jested. "I forgot and left the bathroom door open."

She remained grave.

"I saw you git turned out of the settlement," she announced, studying him.

"That so? Well, I'm here to say I think it was pretty raw," replied Jack.

The girl was puzzled but she pressed her subject.

"I saw you go in, too. And I saw him turn you back. It was Ancie Wiley."

For a moment her countenance was distorted by hate.

"Ancie or Nancy," growled Jack Hackett responsively, "whatever his name is I wish I had him back at Thirteenth and Chouteau for ten minutes. I wouldn't send him home. I'd send him up to Twelfth and Spruce." Jack eyed her for a moment.

"Twelfth and Spruce," he repeated. "That's where the morgue is, you know."

The girl made an apologetic gesture.

"The morgue?" she repeated. "Is that whar you come from, stranger?"

"Huh? I should say not. Do I look that bad?"

The girl made no reply this time, but fidgeted. Jack finished lacing his shoes and arose. He made to cross the little stream but desisted and stood facing her.

"I thought," offered the girl, after a time, "I thought likely I could help you."

She squinted warily toward the village.

"You sure could," agreed Jack, "if you could steer me—I mean show me a place where I could rest up a couple days. I'm all in."

She made a movement of approbation and agreement.

"I could do that," she offered eagerly. "I could do that and——" After a moment of hesitation she leaped across the stream and came close beside him. "And I could show you something you might be looking for," she finished in a whisper, her eyes questioning his anxiously.

"That's fine," chuckled Jack. "I'm glad I met you. You're all right."

She nodded.

"Stranger," she pursued, in a low tone, "stranger, are you willing to bargain with me?"

"Why, I reckon. Sure. What's the bargain?"

"If I agree that I'll help you, will you help me—and not say anything about what I done, either?"

"Help?" smiled Jack. "That's me. What that takes, I've got. I'll help you without any bargain, if you need help. So let's go."

"I can't sense you. You mean you'll help me first and trust my word?"

"I said so."

"Then," she avowed, "I agree. I give ye my pledge and a Bradford never denies his pledge."

"All right, Miss Bradford. Now what's the lay? D'you want to crack a safe or shove funny money, or what?"

The girl retreated into a thicket.

"We dasn't talk any longer," she warned. "They'll be followin' to be sure you don't stop. You keep right on the road till you're up over the ridge. Seeing you pass there, they'll think you gone. I'll be on t'other side. Remember, you've given your word."

Miss Bradford disappeared. Jack took a step in her direction but she protested in desperate tones.

"Don't follow me!"

He set off toward the ridge.

"Holy smoke!" he muttered ruefully, "it's five miles up there."

After a little he chuckled. Of all in the hills, Miss Bradford was probably the one person best able to help him. She was obviously in trouble with the sheriff and she knew the neighborhood. When she had heard Jack's story she would be certain to aid him in hiding himself for several months. Then the trip through the lowlands would not be especially dangerous.

Stimulated by these considerations he made more rapid progress; but even so, it was a long four hours before he completed the steep ascent. The valley lay in the shadow of late afternoon. The village was barely discernible in the distance. Jack grimaced at it.

"So long, sheriff," he announced; "but you ain't seen the last of me yet. I'm going to hang around like the old cat. I know somebody that's no friend of yours but she's a friend of mine."

When he had gone a little way along the descending road, the girl called to him and he found her standing amid a tangle of bushes, as before. Her eyes had a message of approval for him although she was frowning.

"You're slow-footed," she accused. "Terrible."

"I'm tired," said Jack. "I couldn't help it."

"Well, follow me now," she commanded. "It's near sundown."

With which she led off through the rough of the woods. Jack was barely able to keep pace with her and his efforts at jocular conversation soon died. When he reflected that the girl had completed this journey in less time than he had used in following the road, he was stricken with humility.

"Morgue, she said," he panted, "and she's right. I guess I must look like that to her."

They crossed the ridge and worked back toward the settlement. Going across country they saved much distance and Jack was surprised when, after an hour's going, he found the church steeple just beneath him. Now the girl began walking slowly, scanning the underbrush and scattered patches

of laurel in a nervous way. At last, when Jack was beginning to feel a bit less exhausted because of the easier pace, she stopped and pointed ahead.

"There," she announced, "there he is. I want you to help me get him home."

A man lay propped against a fallen tree, with a rifle drawn across his knees. There was a gray pallor on his countenance and his head lolled sidewise.

"He ain't to last long," whispered the girl. "And he wants to die in his bed, like a Bradford should, and not hiding out in the woods."

She raised her voice and called.

"Dad!"

Old man Bradford's eyes opened and he stared weakly in their direction.

"Sissie!" he answered.

"Dad, here's a stranger that Ancie Wiley turned out of the village. He's come to help me carry you home. I didn't have to go to the settlement at all."

The old man blinked in Hackett's direction while the girl removed the rifle and set it up against the log.

"Poor daddy," she sobbed, "much good you'd of been if they'd come."

"Heh?" Bradford made a show of anger. "I wasn't so bad as I looked. I was just waitin'."

Stella arranged an improvised stretcher on the grass, a contrivance which she had hastily manufactured from two pieces of timber and a blanket. Jack stepped forward and lifted the mountaineer into position upon it. As he did so, a crude bandage beneath Bradford's open shirt moved, uncovering a wound near the left shoulder. Jack glanced at it and promptly removed his soft collar, turning it inside out and folding it into a square pad. Placing this on the wound, he tightened the old bandage, deftly stressing it over the far shoulder as a physician had once taught him when he reported to the city dispensary for treatment of his own body.

"Who done that?" he asked, glancing up at the girl. "That's from a gunshot. Who done it?"

The girl pointed toward the village. Her eyes glowed as she did so.

"Him?" asked Jack. "The big fellow?"

She nodded.

"No wonder you don't like him," growled Jack.

They began a weary journey through half a mile or so of woodland. The dead weight of the old man compelled them to set him down often and take breath. All were silent. Jack, for his part, was inspired to sympathetic anger by the girl's obvious hatred of the big sheriff. He would like to get square with that hostile bull before he left this region. He was deterred from planning such a thing by the unwritten code which governed his life. Not that Jack knew there was a code. He merely knew that gangsters and gunmen fought among themselves and kept their secrets to themselves. They did not care to attack officers nor to incur the direct enmity of the law. That kind of work was for yeggs and highwaymen.

Stella, at the forward end of the stretcher, brought them to a cabin set strategically upon a knoll in the center of a clearing. Jack observed, with some surprise, that its windows were heavily boarded and that its walls were of a double thickness of logs. Inside were two rooms. They placed the old man, now unconscious and breathing heavily, upon a bed in the corner of the outer apartment. The girl, with a harried air, began searching out food.

"I can cook as soon as the sun is down," she informed Jack. "Can't now or they'd see the smoke."

Jack rolled a cigarette and lit it and sat watching her while she moved about before a huge fireplace, laying a small wood fire. The cabin, quite obviously, had not been inhabited for some time.

"This your place?" asked Jack.

"Yes," replied the girl. "We ain't been here since last week, ye see. We been hiding out in the woods."

Jack nodded sympathetically.

"So've I," he replied. "And your name is Bradford?"

The girl unbent a trifle from her shy dignity.

"Bradford," she repeated. "I'm Stella. Dad's name is Ashe."

"Are you all there is to the family?"

"All there is left," returned the girl. "My three brothers was killed over to Buck Elk meeting 'bout a month ago. Most of our kin was killed since."

Hackett marveled at her matter-of-fact tone.

"Say," he demanded, "what was the old man running, anyhow? A James gang? Holy smoke, but there must have been some shooting around here!"

"There was," she replied tersely.

Jack strode to the door and looked out over shaded valleys and reddened summits. A faint breeze tinged with coolness the baking heat of the cleared ground and brought the odor of land and foliage to him. Peace and recuperation were borne in that air.

He abandoned the prospect and considered the girl. She was pretty and her gingham garment followed the muscled lines of her body. Jack was unaware of the atrocious red color of the dress. He turned again to the view outside.

"This is about all right," he muttered. "I'll tell the world. I wonder what those fights were about? I might like to stay here —if their game isn't too crude. I don't want to get caught making counterfeits or peddling dope or nothing."

Old man Bradford stirred in his bed and scrutinized the young man. He spoke in a feeble voice.

"Stranger?" he asked, turning his eyes to Jack.

"Yes," informed Stella.

"And they turned him out?"

"Yes, dad."

Bradford smiled a bit proudly.

"Stella," he praised, "you're a good girl. He'll be a fine man fer ye."

"Shut up," snapped Stella and she hurried to her work.

Bradford winked at Jack who smiled in return, although dazzled by the implication of the mountaineer's words. The old man thought they might marry. The old man was willing. Hackett might settle here for good if he wanted. He looked outside again and drew in the cool air in long, contemplative gulps. Thereafter, new pleasure was to be gleaned from the situation. Of necessity, a form of subtle love-making and flirtation must mark all intercourse with Stella. He encountered no great opposition on her part. Which was not surprising. Both were healthy young animals of similar mentality and both were possessed of undeniable physical attraction.

The sun fell and Stella kindled her fire. The cabin filled with mingled odors: frying pork, coffee, corn-meal cakes. They had their meal. Afterward, while Stella cleared away, Jack kept up a desultory conversation with Bradford, who insisted on being elevated in his bed so that he could smoke an ancient corncob pipe which was burned away so far on one side that it was nearly useless. Jack became fidgety.

"Stella!" called the old man suddenly.

The girl turned.

"The stranger might like a drink, being young and healthy."

Jack's heart leaped mightily.

"Oh, boy!" he gasped longingly. "You can certainly guess right."

The girl poured clear white liquor from a jug to a tin cup and handed the cup to Jack, watching him in a peculiar way.

"White mule," chuckled Jack. "I've heard about this. Many thanks and here's looking at you."

He quaffed long and well. When he put the cup down, half empty, he smiled about in extreme beneficence. The stuff left a pleasant, scorched trail through his system.

Darkness came. Stella lit a candle, closed and barred the cabin door and lowered her father to a sleeping position. When Jack had emptied the tin cup, she approached him, cold hostility in her manner.

"I'll settle my part of the bargain now," she announced, "if you're ready to go with me. We'll have to go to-night because I may not be able to leave dad to-morrow."

Jack grinned.

"You've more than settled it, girl," he told her. "You've brought me here and you've give me the first real drink I've had in a month. Why can't I stay and help your dad out for a few days?"

Stella frowned.

"I tell you I can't leave here after to-night. Dad is low now."

"Why do we have to leave? All I want is a place to hide for a while. Unless you mean I'm in the way here?"

The girl whispered angrily.

"Sh! I don't want dad to know what I'm doing. He wouldn't like it."

Jack arose in great confusion.

"Well," he gasped, "I don't make you. What's——"

She caught at his arm and whispered again.

"Don't you want to git Wiley?" she demanded, pointing toward the village with her free hand.

"Get him? How? Shoot him, you mean?"

"No," was her impatient reply, "I said I could show you something you wanted to see, didn't I? I mean his still. I'll take you there now."

"Still? His? Say, ain't he the sheriff?"

"Sheriff nothing!" scorned the girl. "He's a Wiley. They're the worst in these hills. He's big Ancie Wiley. He's—he's a moonshiner."

A great light broke upon Jack. Furious joy gleamed in his eyes.

"What?" he growled. "Him? Well, that great big, dirty-faced dog! If I don't go and pull them rabbit whiskers of his——"

Stella's hand clutched his shoulder.

"Ain't you a revenue?" she demanded.

"No and I'm no foreigner either. Say, what do you people all want to call me names for?"

"You are a foreigner," returned the girl. "You don't belong up here."

'Oh, and am I a revenue because I belong some place else?"

"Revenue officer," snapped the girl. "Secret servicers, they call them."

"Wha-a-at?" choked Hackett. "Me a Washington dick? Oh, girl, get off your foot, your shoes are tired!"

"Ain't you?" persisted Stella.

"No I ain't. If there's one thing I ain't, it's that. Say? What's the matter?"

Tears filled the girl's eyes. She swayed faintly. In alarm, Jack caught her arm and steadied her.

"What good would it do you if I was a bull?" he asked. "Did you want to turn him up?"

She nodded, stamping her foot with fury.

"What for?"

She became more calm.

"I can't tell you," she replied, coldly. "Fergit about it."

"I ain't forgetting anything," announced Jack. "Listen, if you got anything you want squared, why, I don't have to be a bull to square it, do I? I ain't helpless or nothing, you know."

Stella looked toward him hopefully, then gave a shrug of despair and uttered a flood of words.

"What could you do alone? He's got his six cousins with him all the time. They're all bigger than you. Oh, God, why does the Wileys have all the luck and the Bradfords none?"

"Say——" protested Jack.

"They've wiped us out," wailed the girl. "First my three brothers over at Buck Elk. Then my kin. Then dad—down on the road here. Ef you'd been a revenue you could of got your man and put him away in the penitentiary. Now, they've wiped us out, man, woman and child—even my little sister—and nobody's to make them pay!"

Jack seized the hysterical girl by the shoulder.

"Listen, kid!" he growled. "You got me wrong. I know I look foolish but how was I to know he wasn't a sheriff, and how was I to know there was a fight on between his gang and yours. That changes everything, don't you see?"

Stella moved to reply but she was prevented from speaking. There came a sudden crash at the door. The girl's eyes opened wide and her cheeks paled. Bradford arose on his elbow and uttered a moan of despair. The sound was repeated.

"Open up, Bradford," called a strident, hillman's voice. "Ain't no use pretendin' ye're not there because I see yer candlelight under the door. Anyhow, my dog trailed ye here from where ye was hiding in the woods. Open up now or I'll burn yer shack over yer head."

Stella and old man Bradford glanced at each other in dumb misery. Jack turned toward the door with a muttered exclamation of joy.

"Open up," repeated the hillman furiously. "Open up and talk to me, if ye want to live to see morning!"

"Lem'me open for him," whispered Hackett, swelling his chest. "I got jacks or better."

"Sh!" warned the girl. "It's the Wileys. That's Big Ancie. Git up the chimney and run. They'll kill you the minute they see you."

Again the voice from outside.

"Fer the last time, Bradford, open this door. Open or I'll break it down."

Hackett sneered in the direction of the speaker.

"Brought six men to kill a cripple, did ye?" he asked. "Well, boy, you won't have to come again."

"No, no," whispered the girl. "They ain't come fer him. It's fer me."

"For you?" The gangman's murmur had a clanging note. "How's that?"

"He's a Wiley, you see, and he's always been after me. My folk wouldn't let him marry me and that's why he started the old feud over again and made this feud. Now he's swore he'll come and get me and marry me right afore dad. That's why I turned

to the law—to put him away. I thought you——"

An ax crashed at the door. Jack Hackett caught the girl by the arm.

"Quick," he directed. "Go in there. I'll talk to this bird."

He urged her toward the inner room of the cabin.

"No," she moaned, struggling.

"Shush!"

Jack kissed her suddenly and thrust her through the door. Leaping to the bed, he caught up the limp figure of the old man and carried him to her. Before either could protest he had closed the door and was alone in the outer room. He took a long breath and stretched his muscles—shaking with laughter.

"Oh, boy!" he gloated.

The cutting at the door continued. After several minutes the ax bit through the panels and began gnawing at the heavy crossbar. When this was severed the door swung open. There was a moment of quiet while the invaders inspected the interior of the cabin.

"They must have run into the inside room," said a voice. "Quick, let's find them."

Ancie Wiley, with five of the men from the store, entered the cabin and rushed toward the inner door. Wiley's hand was at the latch thong when a strange voice spoke up sharply.

"Jes' a minute, brother!"

The Wileys turned and saw, with a gasp of surprise, the suspected revenue officer seated at one end of a deal table, with the candle before him. His appearance was mystifying, since he had not been there a moment before. This was due to the fact that Jack had artfully concealed himself beneath the table until he was fairly certain all were inside. Now he sat sneering, holding them motionless with his gunman's eyes.

"Yeah, I'm back," he began softly. "An' I come back to stay. Keep them rifles quiet, boys. Yeah, this is just the place I want to live. But I want to live quiet. So lis'n here. Lis'n, big Nancy Wiley."

He met the hillman's outraged gaze.

"Yes, you," he repeated, with a snarl. "You're the mutt. You pertend to be a sheriff and you take a stranger that wants a little drink and you kick him out like he was a dog. You go and get behind a bush and shoot half a dozen poor goops that ain't got sense enough but to stand there and make targets for you. You try and force a decent lady into marrying you. Now, big Nancy, when there's a guy like you in the world, I can't live in the world with'm. This morning you put me out. All fair and square. T'night, I puts you out!"

He snuffed the candle with his fingers and crouched upon the floor. His left hand shot into his pocket and returned to open air equipped with a set of battered brass knuckle protectors. His right, with equal rapidity, brought forth the smoke wagon. He began to creep forward through the dark.

The mountaineers moved about uneasily, uttering ejaculations of bewilderment. After a moment Jack touched some one's knees and drove a sweeping blow upward with his left hand. There was a crunch and a screaming groan. Then the rickety old building shook to the rush of the mountain men. Using pistol butt and knucklets, crouching low except when he arose to strike at a shadowy figure, Jack moved adroitly in and out among them. Twice they had hands on him but each time he broke away, shaking them off like a charging full back. One cousin Wiley fled from the cabin and off through the woods, uttering scream after scream of pain. Another man went stumbling along the partition, moaning. A rifle roared. The smoke wagon answered. For a time the dark was torn by powder flashes.

All memory of the mountains, of the Wileys and Stella Bradford left Jack. His brain, gone wild, reverted to the things it knew best and it seemed to him that he was back in the city. His boys were with him and they were winning a fight of fights. Outside the building patrolmen were rattling their nightsticks and were flying to the police boxes with the riot call. Natives of the ward were hiding in doorways and below window sills, awaiting the clang of patrol and ambulance gongs to signal that the streets were safe again.

Then he found himself crouched by the door, taking breath. Somewhere in the dark a man was panting heavily. Smiling, Jack cocked his pistol with a loud click. A rifle flashed. He caught a glimpse of the owner kneeling behind it and the smoke wagon kicked his hand as it marked the man down with deadly accuracy.

Silence fell.

After a long time, a dim light met Jack's

eyes and he saw, through mists of excitement, a girl approaching with a candle. About the floor were prostrate figures. In the far corner of the room a big man lay on his face. Jack arose, shaking himself. He found the girl at his side, sobbing.

Jack bowed politely.

"Lady," he instructed, "don't send in no riot call. Ring fer an ambulance. And if the captain asks you about it, just say that Jack Hackett was moving into the district."

CONCERNING A TICKLISH QUESTION

FROM an unpartisan point of view it is interesting to note what seems to indicate a tendency toward considering that ticklish matter the tariff as something other than a "party" question and something about which to come to a compromise beneficial to the interests of the country as a whole and calculated to improve economic relations between the United States and other countries rather than to stick out for a free trade "tariff for revenue only" on the one hand or an absolute Chinese Wall of exclusion on the other. That such a way of looking at the subject is at least not so much of the impossibility as it has been is suggested by the action of a committee of the United States Chamber of Commerce in submitting to the fourteen hundred commercial organizations making up the Chamber seven recommendations of tariff policy to be voted upon—in regard to which the answers, when tabulated and digested, should prove of great value, whatever the final result in Congress. Indeed the mere fact of such a body as the United States Chamber of Commerce submitting such a list of recommendations at all should in itself be encouraging to a broadening of attitude on the tariff question.

It is the opinion of the Chamber's committee itself that tariff revision under present rapidly changing economic conditions could not meet the needs of our commerce for any considerable period without provision being made for some flexible system of rate adjustment to operate at need within limits prescribed by Congress, a belief also recently expressed by President Harding. The proposal of such a "flexible" rate system and a complementary suggestion for the creation of a tariff adjustment board to administer adjustable rates form the first two of the Chamber's recommendations. In order to protect business from rate changes at unreasonably short intervals it is recommended that any established rate should be made to be not subject to change within some fixed period from the date when it becomes applicable.

The third proposal is for reasonable protection of industries subject to destructive competition, if of benefit to any considerable section of the country. Akin to this is the Chamber's fourth suggestion that antidumping legislation should be maintained in principle, on the ground that "dumping" of abnormal lots of goods here creates unfair market conditions for producers here. At the same time it is pointed out that as a creditor nation we must look to goods as the main medium by which payment for our exports can be made and it is recommended, fifthly, that the principle of encouragement of our export trade, upon which full national prosperity depends, should be considered in our tariff legislation so far as consistent with reasonable protection of certain industries. In this connection is to be read the Chamber's sixth suggestion that the removal of harmful discrimination against American trade by foreign countries may require such assistance and sanction as can be afforded by our own tariff laws. In conclusion the Chamber advises that the present system of valuation for levy of ad valorem duties should be maintained in preference to the "American Valuation" system.

In all this it is particularly in the advocating of flexible tariff rates and of framing our legislation so as to encourage as much free interchange of goods with other lands as is consistent with the interests of the nation as a whole under existing world conditions that we seem to see indications of a welcome possible change from our old-time attitude of "whole hog or none" toward this everlasting "ticklish" question. Such a change would seem to be truly in tune with that coöperative broadmindedness which the world now needs in all things.

Dan Price

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

DANNY was a young hand workin' on a farm,
Everybody liked him; no one wished him harm:
Danny saved his money, married Nelly Gray,
Took a little homestead and tried to make it pay.

Then there came a railroad bustin' through the land,
Buyin' up a right of way, playin' sleight of hand:
Danny hadn't proved up, so they made it plain,
That he was out, "By right," they said, "of eminent domain."

Danny lost his homestead but didn't lose his grit:
He got a job at wipin', workin' in the pit:
Steady as a time clock, early, long and late,
Then a job of firin' on a local freight.

Danny knew the schedules and every foot of rail
Down on his division along the iron trail:
Years he labored faithful, strong and steady, when,
'Long came his promotion, pullin' Number Ten.

Number Ten, the fast train, passenger, express:
Danny knew her habits and failin's, more or less:
When she carried boodle, where the boodle went,
And what the railroad owed him, even to the cent.

Mighty unexpected, Danny set the air,
Slidin' down a long grade, wheelin' 'em for fair:
Some one in the starlight climbed the step and said
That Danny and his fireman could cut and pull ahead.

Cut the two express cars—said it low and mild:
Danny took his orders as meek as any child:
Hammered on the side door and told 'em not to shoot,
And—the fireman wasn't lookin' when the robber got the loot.

Danny was arrested, and lost his liberty,
But they couldn't get a jury that wouldn't disagree:
Then Danny bought a big farm and took to raisin' grain—
And who'd suspect a lady of holdin' up a train?

The Story of Gombi

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "Luck," "The Mystery of Captain Knott," Etc.

Patrick Spence could shoot more than elephants

PATRICK SPENCE, a real, old Anglo-Irish gentleman, who would have cut your throat had you called him a liar, died not long ago at the age of eighty-six and had a bottle of port with his dinner the day before he took off. Those were Cassidy the old butler's words. Cassidy said the master was as sound as a bell and walking along by the rhododendron bushes to have a look at the new wing they were adding to the stables when he sprang into the air, cried, "Got me by glory!" and fell flat, just as a buck falls when a bullet takes it through the heart. A fit end for a big-game hunter you will say. A fit, anyhow, the doctors said.

The ancestral home of the Spences, The Grange, Scoresby, Lincolnshire, stands half a mile from the road. You reach it by an avenue of chestnuts, and in Patrick's time when the door opened you found yourself in a hall hung with trophies of the chase; the whole house was, in fact, a museum. Never in any man had the passion for collection burned more acutely than in the owner of The Grange, or shown itself in a more extravagant fashion. Here you found lamps upheld by pythons, door handles cut from rhinoceros horn, tables topped with hippopotamus hide, skins and masks everywhere of everything from black buffalo to Burchell's zebra. In the long corridors where the hartebeest heads faced the elands and Grant's gazelle grinned at Bohm's zebra, black bears upheld the electric standards—black bears and apes.

The place was a mausoleum. To walk those corridors at night and alone required a fairly steady nerve, especially when the wind of Lincolnshire was howling outside like a troop of lost hyenas. There were envious men who said that three fourths of this collection had been bought and paid for, but that is the way of the world. No man ever dared to say it to the owner's face.

I was staying at a village ten miles from Scoresby and twelve from The Grange, when one day I met the old gentleman, whom I had known in London, and he invited me to a day's fishing in the stream that runs past The Grange to join the Witham. We had good sport, but toward the end of the day the rain began—the rain of Lincolnshire driving across the fens, drenching, disastrous, dismal. Spence insisted on my staying for dinner and the night; he gave me a rig-out which included a Canadian blanket coat and a pair of slippers and a dinner of the good old times, including a cod's head served with oyster sauce and a capon the size of a small turkey.

Afterward we sat by the hall fire and talked, the light from the burning logs striking here and there, illuminating horns and masks and giving a fictitious appearance of life to the snow leopard crouching as if to spring at me from behind the door.

"Are those slippers comfortable?" asked Spence, filling his pipe from the tobacco jar—one of his infernal trophies, a thing made out of a cross section of elephant shin bone drilled out, for the leg bones of elephants have no marrow.

"Quite, thanks."

"I got 'em in a queer way, didn't pay a cent for them, either." The cherry-colored cheeks of the old gentleman sucked in and he made the pipe draw against its will. Then, safely in the clouds, he went on. "Not a cent, though they cost me the lives of several men and near three hundred pounds of good ivory."

"Mean to say you gave three hundred pounds of ivory for these old slippers?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said he. "It was such a mixed business. I'll have to give you the whole story if you are to understand it, and first of all I must tell you that though my yarn has to do with Africa those slippers weren't made in Africa.

"You've been to Cape Town, haven't you?

—and Durban and away up to Pretoria by rail, maybe—and you've passed thousands of square miles of country that I've seen crawling with game in my time—quagga, gnu, rhinoceros, lion—all gone now, not enough left to feed an aasvogel. Yes, I've seen that country when it was only to be compared to the country south of the Orange toward Cape Town—one big game preserve. And it was on my second visit to it that the things happened I am going to tell you of.

"I was hunting with Tellemark, a Swede, I think he was, or Norwegian, I forget which, and we were traveling south of the Limpopo and close on to Portuguese territory; we had a regular caravan—four ox wagons, half a dozen horses, and about forty Kafirs; and we'd had good hunting, waterbuck, buffalo, rhino and giraffe, but little elephant. However we were getting into the elephant country—a big rolling country, broken by thick bush and mimosa trees, with great clumps of forest sweeping away west where you could see the giraffes grazing against the trees, looking like toy giraffes taken out of a Noah's ark.

"The place was thick with game. I've seen what looked like a moving cloud shadow miles away—it was a herd of springboks, thousands of them. I have seen twenty rhinoceros in five square miles of that country, and buffalo by the hundred. But one day I saw something stranger than all these. We had rounded a big clump of trees on our second day after entering this country, when we came upon an elephant. He was lying down, dead, a great brute thirteen feet to the shoulder, with ears six foot from tip to lobe, and tusks weighing, we guessed, close on three hundred pounds. The heaviest tusks ever taken in Africa weighed four hundred and fifty, so you may guess we were on to a pretty good thing. But the strange part of the show wasn't the elephant but the chaps that had killed him. Pygmies—little chaps not five foot high.

"As far as I can make out there are several tribes of Pygmies lingering about in the African forests, and dying out so quick that to-day they are there and to-morrow they are gone. This lot we struck were evidently the stump end of some tribe worn down just to twenty or thirty members; they had killed the elephant on the edge of the forest and they were on him like flies. The trunk and feet had been cut off and the stomach cut open with a big stick stuck to keep it so; half the tribe was inside the elephant and half on top and round about. But when they saw us they dropped everything and made off, running for the woods—reminded me of a lot of sparrows flying from a cat; but one chap failed to get away, he tripped on something, fell flat on his face, and before he could get on his hands and knees, I had him.

"He kicked and fought, but only from fright, and after a while he quieted down and Tellemark gave him some sugar. You should have seen his face when he tasted the sugar! It didn't seem a bad face, either, round and chubby. And that and the small size of him, together with his plumpness and the bow and arrow he had dropped, made us call him Cupid. The bow was the smallest I have ever seen, not a foot from tip to tip. The arrows were wrapped round with a piece of hide—kind of an attempt at a quiver; there were dozens of them, not thicker much than knitting needles, and without barbs.

"We thought at first that the arrows were used for killing small birds, but our Kafirs knew different; they pointed to the elephant and, sure enough, there was an arrow sticking in the great ear of the brute, and three or four more sticking in the skin. They were poisoned arrows, and what the poison could have been, Lord knows, but something pretty powerful, for a rifle couldn't have done the business better. We gave the arrows back to the chap, and the bow, expecting to see him make off to the woods after the others. Not he. The first fright over and seeing that we weren't dangerous, he hung on, staring at the wagons; it was plain he had never seen anything on wheels before, and when Tellemark got one of the wagons on the move for a few yards to show him how it was done, he cried out like a bird chirruping, and laughed with one hand on his pot-belly till the laughter took the pair of us and doubled us up. But the Kafirs didn't laugh; didn't seem to see anything funny in him at all; and they didn't call him Cupid; they called him Gombi.

"Our head man said he was no good, belonged to a bad lot and that we had better get rid of him. But Gombi had his own ideas about that. He seemed to have attached himself to us as a stray dog does and he hung round while the boys were taking the tusks, chirruping to himself and dodging about looking at this and that till

the funniest feeling got hold of me that he wasn't human but some sort of being from another world that had come across humans for the first time and was taking stock of them. But I hadn't long to think about him, for all of a sudden round us the air was becoming filled with a stench worse than I ever smelled before.

"It was the elephant. The thing had been new killed and warm when we struck it and now it was going like this, decomposing right under our eyes, for great blisters were rising on the skin—and I won't go into details. "The poison has done that," said Tellemark. "Looks like it," said I. "Let's shift and get beyond the wagons. The Kafirs won't mind." We got away beyond the wagons and lay down on the wire grass watching the boys at work and Gombi hopping round them. Right up above them was a vulture waiting till we had cleared off. I watched him coming down and going up again. Sometimes you couldn't see him at all, then he showed like a pin point, then he'd get bigger, then smaller.

"Now a vulture even when he is so high as to be beyond sight can see the body of a dwarf antelope, let alone an elephant, so this chap wasn't coming up and down to prospect; it was sheer impatience, hunger. And I was thinking how full of hunger that sky was when Tellemark shifted his position, and looking up I saw a bull rhino that had broken out of the thick stuff on the forest edge and was coming toward us moving quick, but unflurried. The wind was coming with him so he couldn't scent us and being half blind he couldn't see us. Two rhinoceros birds were with him, but they weren't on his back, they were flying about here and there, following him, and they didn't seem alarmed. That's funny, isn't it, for if those birds had been on his back when he was standing still or moving very slowly they would have cried out at once at the sight of us. Seems to me sometimes as if the animal and bird world is driven by clockwork, not sense. Then, other times, it seems as though there were a big genius behind their movements. Anyhow, the rhino came along unwarned and Tellemark let him get within thirty yards before he dropped him with a shoulder shot, dead as mutton.

"The boys working on the tusks had been looking on, so had Gombi; and when the dwarf saw old pongo graveled like that he came running for all he was worth, skipping round the dead brute, plugging his finger in the bullet wound and sucking it same as a child might with a pie. And then, when he'd done with the rhino, he fastened on to the rifle, looking down the barrels, sniffing at them and evidently connecting the smell with the smell of powder in the air. Then he examined the locks, as interested as a magpie with a marrow bone.

"When he'd done he seemed to have come to the conclusion that a Purdy eight-bore was a weapon he would like to have further acquaintance with, for he pointed to the elephant, then to the gun, then to himself and then away to the west. Then he opened and shut the hand that wasn't holding the bow, about a dozen times. What he said was clear enough. There were many elephants to the west and he would lead us to them if we would take the gun and shoot them.

II.

"Between the wood clump and the one to the west there was maybe five miles of country rolling and dipping, broken here and there with euphorbia and mimosa trees. When we'd taken the tusks of the elephant and some of the rhino meat, we determined to shove right across and camp near the other woodside; first of all the elephant was getting more punch in its perfume; second, we wanted to put a considerable distance between ourselves and those confounded Pygmies, and third, Cupid was evidently in earnest when he gave us the news of elephant herds to the west.

"We hadn't given much thought to the dwarf's sign language, and as we started we expected to see him go off back to his friends who were, no doubt, watching us from the trees. Not a bit. He had stuck to us for keeps, as the Yankees say, and when I look back and think how that little chap stuck to us and followed us, it seems to me that there was a bit of Christopher Columbus and Leefe Robinson mixed up with the rest of his character. For it was plain as paint he'd never seen white men or guns before.

"He kept along with us right in our tracks like a dog, evidently thinking we had fallen in with his proposition about the elephant hunting, and he wasn't far wrong. We had, in a way, without knowing it. For next morning when we were holding a hunt council, Tellemark, seeing that Gombi was still

hanging about, waded right in with the proposition that we'd take the chap for guide —use him as a dog, so to speak, to find the game. I thought our native boys would buck against it, but our head man seemed to have lost his grudge against the chap; got used to him, I suppose, and didn't put up any difficulties. That settled it. Leaving the main camp under our head man's brother, we started, twelve in all, not counting Gombi, with provisions enough for a week, though we didn't expect to be more than three days.

"We went along the wood belt due west for half a day, then the forest took a big bend and as we turned it, just about three in the afternoon, we came on great wads of chewed bowstring hemp lying about, and the trees alongside of us looked as if a hurricane had stripped them of their leaves and broken their branches. Elephants are vegetarians and there's not a vegetable they won't eat from an acacia tree to a cabbage; they'll beat small trees down and eat them clear of leaves and bark, and they'll simply skin big trees, besides reaching up with their trunks and stripping the branches. Fortunately the wind had wandered round and was blowing from the west; for a moment after sighting the chewed hemp Gombi gave us a sign to halt. We saw nothing, but this little chap had eyes like a vulture and he saw away far ahead of us a movement in the treetops at one particular spot as if a wind was tossing them and then we knew there was a herd of elephants in the forest just there, feeding and shaking the trees.

"It took us an hour to get within shot. They weren't feeding in the forest itself, but in a great bay among the trees; a fairish big herd, bulls, cows, and calves, some of the calves not more than a week old, little pinkish beggars, not bigger than a Newfoundland dog. We dropped two bulls, and when we'd taken their tusks and had supper that night, Gombi had fairly put his clutch on us and we were ready to follow him anywhere.

III.

"It's a funny thing, but if we had come upon a poisonous snake we would have killed it right away without a thought. Yet coming upon a creature like Gombi, more poisonous than a snake and a lot more criminal, seeing he had invented and made his own poison, we let him live and even took him as a guide—like fools. And next day, listening to his sign talk and making out that if we followed him and struck right through the woods he could lead us to another hunting ground, we followed him.

"First we struck a great acacia belt and then we came on nsambyas and plantains mixed with cottonwood. The big lianas began to swing themselves across the trees and ground lianas to trip us, but the worst was to come, and it came about six hours after we had entered the trees. We struck a long patch where the nipa palms grew, springing like rockets out of the mud, and where you couldn't take a step without sinking over ankle, then over knee, then to the middle. When you pulled your foot out there was a pound of black mud sticking to it. But Gombi didn't mind. He knew that place by instinct and piloted us along till he reached firm ground, stretching like a road across the bad places and on we went till we hit the same thing again.

"When we camped that night we had three of those long stretches behind us, crossed by roads that only Gombi knew. That was a nice position, wasn't it, for a lot of sane men to get themselves into and instead of tying him up and making him lead us back we let him share our meat and listened to more of his sign talk, telling us that a few hours more march would bring us out next day where there were elephants to be found more than he could number.

"Next day when we woke up he was gone—clean gone. Tellemark and I had done sentry duty during the night, not trusting the boys, but we had heard nothing and seen nothing. He must have slipped away like a snake and it came to me, like a blow over the heart, that we were lost men. Instinct told me that this beast, intending to destroy us for some reason of his own, would do his work thoroughly, and I was right. We had a compass with us and after swallowing our food we started still west, guessing that the forest wouldn't last forever in that direction. But what's the good of a compass when it only leads you to a bog patch? We hadn't been half an hour on the march when we hit one just as bad as the ones over which Gombi had piloted us; worse, for we couldn't find a road across anywhere.

"There was a big fallen tree just there and I sat down on it. I was knocked out for the moment. I sat there pretending to

be thinking, but I was thinking about nothing, except that we were done. That was against reason, for it was clear that by searching we might be able to find those three roads again that would lead us back east, and where there's half a chance no man has a right to give in. But the truth was my imagination had been seized by Gombi. His picture stood before my mind as a thing that was all cunning and evil—that and the picture of ourselves in his toils.

"Then at last I got a clutch on myself and as I came out of the doldrums a big idea struck me, big enough to make me laugh, it seemed so luminous and good.

" 'What's the matter?' asked Tellemark.

" 'The nipa palms,' said I. 'They only grow in the boggy places and they'll show us where the firm ground begins.'

" 'But see here,' said Tellemark. 'Those roads weren't more than twenty feet wide and the palms seemed just as thick there.'

" 'Bother the roads,' said I. 'Those long mud stretches don't run forever north and south. We've got to get round them not across them. Let's strike on till we reach the palms and then strike north for choice till the palms give out.'

"He saw my meaning at once, and we started due east, returning on our tracks.

"We hadn't gone more than a few hundred yards when suddenly one of the boys looked at his arm—something was sticking from it. It was one of those infernal knitting-needle arrows that had struck him and struck without causing the least pain. It had come from the thick growth to the right and Tellemark and I without stopping to look at the boy plunged right in, chasing here and there, beating the bush and firing our rifles on chance. Not a sign of anything. When we got back the chap was dead.

"It took about twelve seconds for that poison to do its work.

IV.

"Now you'll see plainly enough that this new development had made matters ten times worse. Yet instead of that depressing me it bucked me like a glass of brandy. Sitting there on the log and thinking of those bog patches round us like traps I'd been down out of sight in the blues; but now I was as full of life and energy as a grig. Had to be, for the boys, stampeded by fright, tried to break. Tellemark and I had our work cut out kicking and gun-butting them so that at the end of two minutes they were as frightened of us as of Gombi. If we hadn't done that they'd have run in every direction, north, south, east and west, and some would have been bogged and the rest starved and we with them, for they were throwing the provisions away. We stopped all that and made them shoulder the bundles and shoulder the tusks. It may seem funny to you that we should bother about the tusks, seeing the position we were in; but if we had abandoned that ivory just then we would have lost half our hold over the boys; they'd have seen that Gombi had rattled us.

"We struck the nipa palms after half an hour or so and turned north, Tellemark leading, while I brought up the rear, each of us with our guns ready to shoot the first man that bolted and both of us full up with the knowledge that somewhere in the trees Gombi was tracking us and only waiting his chance.

"We had frightened him evidently by chasing and firing through the bushes, for the whole of that day we heard no more from him. We made good way and got clear at last from the infernal nipa palms into a great tract of cottonwoods and nsambyas.

"Lord! it was like getting out of prison. We knew we had got to the stump end of the bogs and, turning due east, we reckoned an eight-hour tramp or so would bring us out somewhere into the open where we had left the main camp.

"Tellemark and I figured it out as we went. Four hours due east, was our idea, and four hours due south. We were right as it afterward turned out, but we had reckoned without the dark. A couple of hours after we had turned east it came on and we had to camp in a little glade, eating our supper in the last of the daylight and then lying down. We daren't build a fire and we put out no sentries. If Gombi were laying round, sentries were no use against him in that black dark and he was the only thing we feared. We lay spread about, the boys pretty close together and Tellemark and I apart from them and side by side.

"We talked for a bit as we lay there, speaking almost in a whisper, and then we lay quiet, but we couldn't sleep. The boys

slept like logs. They thought themselves safe in the dark, no doubt.

"As for myself I felt certain that beast was lurking somewhere near and that he would be up to some trick, though what I couldn't say. I lay listening for sounds and heard plenty. Away off, miles away it seemed, I heard the cry of a lion. Not the questing cry, but the cry of a lion that has fed; then I heard the rooting of a bush pig. Then, somewhere in the forest, maybe a mile away, a tree went smash. You often hear that and there is no other sound like it. Some great cottonwood or euphorbia going rotten for years had suddenly tumbled.

"After that things got pretty silent till suddenly there came a little sound that made my heart jump—something different from any other sound.

" 'Thr-rub-b!'

"I couldn't be sure, but I could have sworn it was the sound of a taut string suddenly relaxed. I waited. Then after a while it came again.

" 'Thr-rub-b!'

"I drew my head close to Tellemark's and whispered, 'Is that the sound of a bow?'

" 'Yes,' he whispered.

" 'Shall we fire?' I asked him, and he whispered back, 'No, we'd stampede the boys—chap's shooting on chance: Don't move.'

"I took his meaning. Gombi had marked us down. Afraid of firing when there was light enough to chase him by, he was shooting blind in the hope of bagging some of us—maybe getting the lot. He'd hit nothing as yet evidently.

"I lay still and said my prayers and the thing went on. Five or six times that bow went; then it stopped. A minute passed, ten minutes.

"I whispered to Tellemark, 'He's gone,' and the whisper came back, 'Not he—changing his position.'

"I felt things running down my face—sweat drops. Far away off in the woods came a cry; it was the cry of a hyena; then silence shut down again. Not a sound, till suddenly—but farther away now—came the noise of the bow.

" 'Thr-rub-b!' and after it, right over my head, something passed through the air. 'Whitt!' An arrow had missed me by inches. I whispered to Tellemark. 'Shall we fire?' and the whisper came back, 'No. Don't know where he is. Flash would give him our position—stampede boys. Chance it.'

"It went on. No more arrows came near. Then it stopped. The beast was evidently changing his position again. A minute passed and then suddenly out of the dark there came a muffled crash followed by a squeal and silence. I listened, the sweat running into my eyes, and there came a new sound close beside me. It was from Tellemark. He seemed in convulsions. I thought one of the poisoned arrows must have got him, he was shaking and choking. I clutched him by the shoulder but he shook himself free.

" 'I'm all right,' he whispered. 'I'm only laughing—oh, Lord, can't you see, that chap's fallen into an elephant trap.' Then he went off again. It wasn't laughter so much as hysterics, sheer hysterics from the snapping of the tension and the relief.

"Tellemark had an ear that could tell the meaning of any sound, and by the sound he had heard he could tell the truth as plainly as though he had seen Gombi treading on the bush covering of an elephant trap and its collapse. Now that he had told me, I could see it too. After a while, when he had quieted down, I asked him should we rouse the boys and get the beast out, and he whispered 'No, can't do it in the dark. Leave him till morning and get to sleep.'

"I heard him give a few more chuckles as he turned about, then I heard him breathing quietly and next minute I was asleep myself. I slept for hours and when I awoke it was just before dawn. Tellemark had stirred me up. 'Smell that?' he whispered.

"I did. Then the truth broke upon me and I lay there in the dark thinking of Gombi's work and waiting for day to show how many he had got. Then as the day broke I could see, lying there among the others who were soundly asleep, the swollen bodies of three of the boys, each with an arrow sticking somewhere in him. The bite of the arrows hadn't been enough to wake them.

" 'We've got to get those chaps away before the others see them,' said Tellemark. We did—into the woods far to leeward. When we returned, we could see in the stronger light arrows sticking here and there in the trees, arrows that had missed their mark. We broke them off carefully, and

flung them away lest the boys should see them. Then we located the pit with its broken cover. Then, and not till then, we kicked the boys awake and before they had time to look round told them Gombi was in the pit.

"Tellemark had peeped down and seen that it was unstaked, and then began a powwow as to how we should get the creature out.

"All sorts of suggestions came from the boys, one fellow wanted to catch a wild cat and lower it tied by the tail, the cat would catch Gombi and we'd drag both up. Not a bad idea either, only we hadn't a wild cat. Then I solved the business by jumping down myself. He showed no fight and we had him out in a tick and he bothered the world no more.

"That's all; we got back to camp all right, only we forgot the tusks in our excitement, nearly three hundred pounds of ivory.

"Those slippers," finished the collector of trophies, "are made of Gombi's skin. Allenby, of Bond Street, made them for me."

By his look of expectancy I guessed at once that I was not the only man he had trapped into wearing those slippers while listening to that tale. But the howl of disgust he was waiting for never came—and he never forgave me, I think. The story ought to end here, but it doesn't. For the chief protagonist is not Gombi but Patrick Spence.

It remains only to ask and answer the debated question—does the gun like the fishing rod breed liars?

At the great sale after Sir Patrick's death I bought those slippers for four and sixpence and sent them to a high authority, with a simple question and a stamped telegraph form. The reply came promptly next day. "Absolutely not. Lamb skin."

The first half of a long two-part story, "Vanderdecken," by Mr. Stacpoole will appear in the March 7th issue.

THE DOCTOR'S RÔLE

TWO men in a Washington street car last March were discussing the ruling of the department of justice that physicians could prescribe beer as a medicine for people who needed it.

"Pretty fine!" exulted the florid fat man. "I have a doctor who'll prescribe it for me by the case. He's the most obliging doctor I know."

"Huh!" retorted the skinny, jerky man who looked like a whisky drinker. "I've got one more obliging than that. I can get him to my room seven minutes after I've drunk some of this stuff the bootleggers sell as whisky. That's what I call a doctor who's a friend indeed!"

WHEN PEOPLE ANNOY

WHEN you say people annoy you, the truth is that you are annoying yourself. The feeling of irritability at having to be pleasant to everybody who enters your office arises from your inability to be pleasant to yourself. For some reason you are not on good terms with yourself. Pause and think back. Try to remember what problem or worry it is that you have refused to face and think out to its logical end. When you have found it and properly dealt with it, people will no longer rub you the wrong way, because you will no longer visit upon them the impatience you subconsciously feel with yourself.

A Chat With You

MOST of us will soon be taking a day off because it happens to be Lincoln's birthday. We don't suppose Lincoln would have minded that.

He once ran a grocery store. We wonder how he would have run this magazine if it had been his job. We dare say he would have had more humor in it, all sorts of funny stories, some of them collected, some of them made up by himself. He would have discovered a new Artemus Ward.

These two pages would have been much better written, more in the style of the Gettysburg address.

He would not have tried to fool any part of the people any of the time. He would have made it a magazine "of the people, by the people, for the people."

This is what we are trying to do.

THE way to write easily about a great man is to go in for little personal anecdotes, to describe what he ate and what he wore, to retell the jokes he cracked.

All the anecdotes about Lincoln we know are known to every one, what he was like personally is like the grass in the park, public property and we have no right to walk on it. As for the retold funny stories of great men—they convulsed the hearers when the great men told them, but rehashed they have always made us feel as if we had been living in the Dismal Swamp.

What we are interested in is the quality that made Lincoln one of the great world figures. Whence came his power? Where did he get his punch?

He combined in one personality unflinching honesty, strong ambition, great ability. This is a combination sufficiently rare to elevate any man. But he had more besides.

He had the coolest head of his generation. Compassionate, gentle, stirred deeply by any wrong, he had the will to keep his head when no one else could, he had the purpose to think wisely and temperately in a surge of confusing passions and clamors.

You remember the story of Samson in the Bible. We have read it, seen it pictured, seen it in the opera.

The blind athlete, chained by the Philistines to the pillars of the temple, straining with all his might till the pillars crack and rock and the temple falls and crushes all beneath it.

Here we have a new Samson whom no treachery could blind, whom no Philistine could chain. His head is erect beneath the blows. His eyes are untortured and far seeing, his countenance has the sad, ironic stamp of understanding. He clutches the pillars of a finer temple and bends his great strength and resolution to hold them firm against those who would tear them down.

IF Lincoln were living now he might be a reader of our sort of fiction. He had a great mind and so was not a highbrow.

It is possible that living in this genera-

tion he might not be president, nor even in public life at all. Lincoln was ambitious and the rewards to the ambitious were comparatively greater in politics in his time than they are to-day. For his generation, the ministry, scholarship, or politics offered the most attractive career and the gateway to politics was through the practice of the law.

Since then, a whole new world of commerce and industry has grown up, a new world of scientific research and discovery.

American literature has developed a new life and vigor and for one book or magazine in Lincoln's time there are a hundred to-day.

What will the great man of the future be? Perhaps he will be a scientist, perhaps a great organizer of labor and industry. Perhaps he will be the man who brings labor and capital into closer harmony and union.

There have been times in all countries when the great men of the day were writers. Perhaps he will be a writer.

And so we are looking for him.

TO get back to the question of who was the original POPULAR reader. C. S. Head, of Taft, California, writes:

"I was the first to read the copy of the first issue that came to Troop H, Fifth United States Cavalry, over in the Philippines. I had an unfair advantage over the other boys, for I was troop clerk and got first crack at the mail. Needless to say, no one ever saw the succeeding numbers till I had read them."

Frank Koss, of Fremont, Nebraska, has also read every issue.

"No. 1, Volume I, was in my hands as soon as it appeared on the news stands," writes F. R. N., of Rockport, Illinois. "I have missed just two copies since. A few years ago I shipped ten years of the POPULAR home to my folks, then gave three or four years to the boys at Camp Grant. Have the balance up to date stacked away. Who remembers when Coolidge began writing for the POPULAR and what the story was?"

"I can come pretty near to claiming the honor," says Charles Wilhelm, of Erie, Pennsylvania. "I was at that time with my brother in Williamsport where he has a stationery store and handles all the periodicals. When the first POPULAR came in it looked good to me. I have not missed a single number since. For fifteen years I have had access to all the magazines but the POPULAR was the only one I considered worth keeping. I have paid $1.20 to $3.00 for books, for supposedly good stories, but the stories in your magazine have them all faded."

If any one who has a complete file of the POPULAR wants to dispose of any of the back numbers it might be well for him to let us know. Sometimes we have calls for back numbers we cannot supply.

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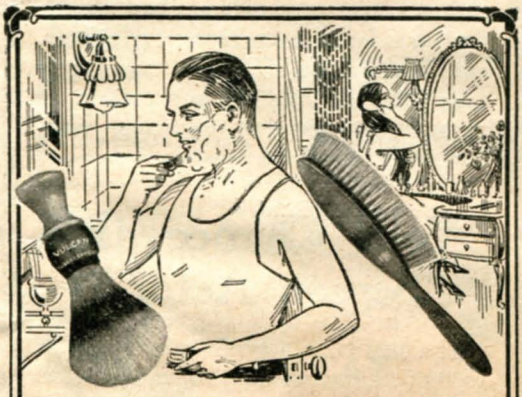

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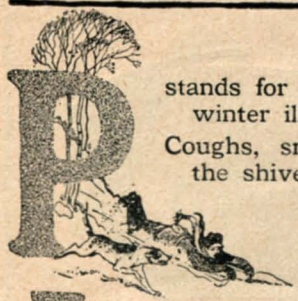

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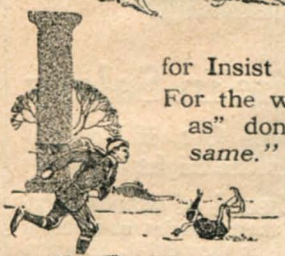
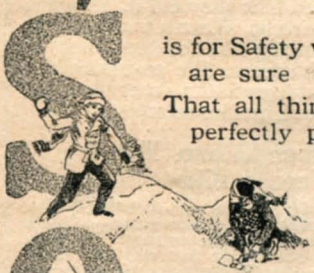


for Insist on Piso's by name
For the words "Just as good as" don't mean "Just the *same.*"



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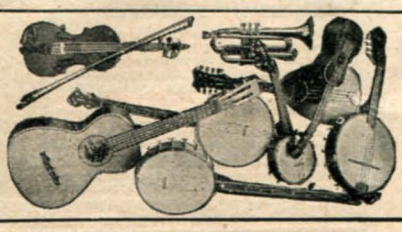

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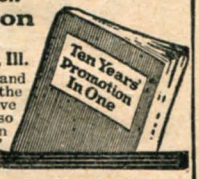

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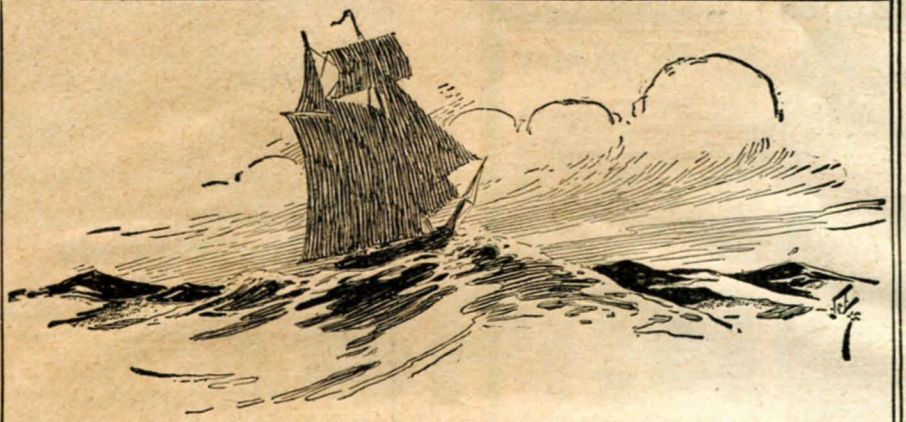

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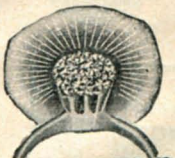

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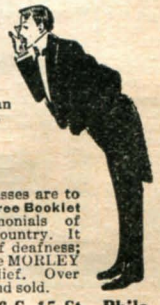

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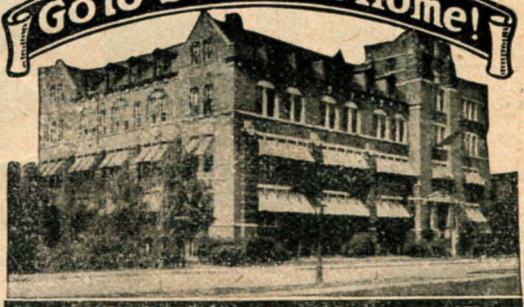

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...Building Contractor	$5,000 to $10,000	...Mechanical Engineer	$4,000 to $10,000
...Automobile Engineer	$4,000 to $10,000	...Shop Superintendent	$3,000 to $7,000
...Automobile Repairman	$2,500 to $4,000	...Employment Manager	$4,000 to $10,000
...Civil Engineer	$5,000 to $15,000	...Steam Engineer	$2,000 to $4,000
...Structural Engineer	$4,000 to $10,000	...Foreman's Course	$2,000 to $4,000
...Business Manager	$5,000 to $15,000	...Sanitary Engineer	$2,000 to $5,000
...Certified Public Accountant	$7,000 to $15,000	...Telephone Engineer	$2,500 to $5,000
...Accountant and Auditor	$2,500 to $7,000	...Telegraph Engineer	$2,500 to $5,000
...Draftsman and Designer	$2,500 to $4,000	...High School Graduate	In two years
...Electrical Engineer	$4,000 to $10,000	..Fire Insurance Expert	$3,000 to $10,000
...General Education	In one year.		

Name..... Address.....

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FIRST PRIZE $3,000.00

How Many Objects Beginning With "P" can You Find in This Picture?

COSTS NOTHING TO TRY—YOU CAN WIN $3,000

This is, perhaps, the most liberal, the most stupendous offer of its kind ever appearing in this magazine. It is not a dream but a reality, a golden opportunity for you to help yourself to $3000.00. It will be easy! Think what you can do with this young fortune and then help yourself.

It costs nothing to try. In this picture you will find a number of objects and parts of objects whose names begin with the letter "P." Pick out the objects like "Pie" "Plank" etc. It's easy isn't it. Of course it is. The other objects are just as easy to see but the idea is to see who can get the most. This is not a trick. You don't have to turn the picture up side down. Put down each word as you find it and watch your list grow.

Get the family around the table—see which one of you can find the most "P" words. You will be surprised to see how fast your list of words will grow in just a few minutes. Try it today, right now as you will never have an easier chance to get a big cash prize.

Send in your list of words and try for the big prizes. This is not a subscription contest—you don't have to do any canvassing. You don't have to send in a subscription to win a prize unless you want to, but our Bonus Rewards for you make the prizes bigger where subscriptions are sent in. For example, if your puzzle answer is awarded first prize by the judges you will win $25.00, but if you would send $3.00 worth of subscriptions for our big monthly magazine you would win $750.00, or if your answer is awarded first prize prize by the judges and you have sent in $5.00 worth of subscriptions you would win $3000.00. See list of prizes above. Nothing more will be asked of you—its easy, isn't it. I don't care how many similiar offers you have seen and read this is the most liberal of them all.

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Puzzle Editor - THE HOUSEHOLD JOURNAL

Department 1104 BATAVIA, ILLINOIS

Follow these Simple Easy Rules

1. Any man, woman, boy or girl living in the U. S. but residing outside of Batavia, Ill., who is not an employee of the Household Journal, or a member of the employee's family, may submit an answer. It cost nothing to try.
2. All answers must be mail by May 30, 1922.
3. Answers should be written on one side of the paper only and words numbered consecutively, 1, 2, 3, etc. Write your full name and address on each page in the upper right-hand corner. Do not write subscribers' names or any thing else on same paper with list of words use separate sheet.
4. Only words found in the English dictionary will be counted. Do not use compound, hyphenated or obsolete words. Use either the singular or plural, but where the plural is used the singular cannot be counted, and vice versa.
5. Words of the same spelling can be used only once, even though used to designate different objects. The same objects can be named only once; however, any part of the object may also be named.
6. The answer having the largest and nearest correct list of words of visible objects shown in the picture that begin with the letter "P" will be awarded First Prize, etc. Neatness, style or handwriting have no bearing upon deciding the winners.
7. Candidates may co-operate in answering the Puzzle, but only one prize will be awarded to any one household: nor will prizes be awarded to more than one of any group outside of the family where two or more have been working together.
8. All answers will receive the same consideration regardless of whether or not subscribtions for the Household Journal are sent in.
9. Three prominent business men, having no connection with the Household Journal, will be selected to act as judges and decide the winners, and participants agree to accept the decision of the judges as final and conclusive.
10. The judges will meet directly following close of the contest and announcement of winners and correct list of words will be published in the Household Journal just as quickly thereafter as possible.

Larger Puzzle Pictures Free on Request.

The Prizes

Winning answers will receive prizes as follows:

	If no subscriptions are sent	If $3.00 worth of subscriptions are sent	If $5.00 worth of subscriptions are sent
1st Prize	$25.00	$750.00	$3000.00
2nd Prize	20.00	250.00	1000.00
3rd Prize	15.00	125.00	500.00
4th Prize	10.00	75.00	250.00
5th Prize	5.00	50.00	125.00
6th Prize	5.00	25.00	50.00
7th Prize	3.00	15.00	30.00
8th Prize	3.00	10.00	20.00
9th Prize	2.00	10.00	15.00
10th Prize	2.00	10.00	10.00

In the event of ties the full amount of the prizes tried for will be given to each of those so tying.

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